

S E R M O N S

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

By the late Reverend

Mr. *JAMES MILLER.*

*Publiſh'd for the Benefit of the WIDOW
of the deceas'd Author.*



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S E R M O N S

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ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

M. JAMES WILKER.

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To my SUBSCRIBERS.



HE distressful Circumstances of the Widow will, no doubt, My kind Benefactors, plead in Excuse for any Thing imperfect, or amiss in these Discourses, gather'd from the scatter'd Papers of my deceased Husband. The first of them Mr. *Miller* published in his Life-time; and I am told with great Approbation. The rest of them are posthumous indeed, without the least sign of an Intention for other Publication than that of the Pulpit. Our Application therefore is to your Christian Charity, not to a Critical Judgment; for I must further own, that, so pressing were my present Difficulties, and so late the Season,

To my SUBSCRIBERS.

I could not give the Gentleman, whom I engag'd to peruse them, so much Time for a stricter Revival of them, as He requir'd: The most He could do at present, was collecting them into some Form, and correcting them for the Press; and herein I am persuaded He has used his utmost Care.

Particular Obligations I likewise owe to the Gentleman, who first proposed, and greatly forwarded this Design in my behalf. For which and the many Favours received, I here return him the sincere Thanks of a grateful Heart, and desire that you, my kind Friends in this generous Subscription, would accept the same, from

Your most obliged

and most Obedient

Humble Servant,

DOROTHY MILLER.



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*The Causes of Britain's being become a
Reproach to her Neighbours.*

A FAST-SERMON:

Preach'd at Roehampton, in the County of
Surry, on *Wednesday, January 9, 1739.*
being the Day appointed by Proclamation
for a solemn FAST, &c.

DANIEL ix. 16.

O Lord, according to all thy Righteousness, I
beseech thee, let thy Anger and thy Fury be
turned away from the City Jerusalem, thy holy
Mountain; because for our Sins, and for the
Iniquities of our Fathers, Jerusalem and thy
People are become a Reproach to all that are
round about us.

TH E Occasion of this Day's Solem-
nity had been so long the big Wish
and Expectation of the People, that
they poured out their Hearts in Be-
nedictions for the Accomplishment of it, join-
ing with the Prophet *Ezra*, and saying, *Blessed*
be the Lord God of our Fathers, which has put
B *such*

such a Thing as this in the King's Heart. Nay, the very Opening of this important Enterprise was attended with such Shouts and Exultations, as spoke rather the Voice of Conquest and Triumph, than that of the Proclamation of a hazardous War.

'Tis very true, indeed, that a War founded upon the Principles of national Self-defence, and undertaken to support the Rights of an injured People, against a faithless, unbending, barbarous Foe, whom no Ties could bind, nor Leagues secure, carries its Justifications in its Necessity ; so far, therefore, the present War is right, and as it should be. But still, as it is War, it is certainly an Evil : If killing and destroying, if Convulsions of Kingdoms, and Desolations of Countries, may be stiled Evils. It is likewise dubious and dangerous as to its Consequences, though never so requisite or unavoidable in itself: With all the Reason in the World therefore, are we here met together for the solemn Humiliation of ourselves with Fasting and Prayer, to confess our Iniquities before Almighty God, to deprecate the Judgments they have so justly deserved, and to implore the divine Blessing and Assistance on his Majesty's Arms, in restoring Peace and Prosperity to Him and his Kingdoms. For however confident we may be of our Success, and plume ourselves upon our boasted Superiority over the Enemy, weak is the Reliance upon an Arm of Flesh. The Successes of War depend upon

A FAST-SERMON.

3

upon a thousand Contingencies, which short-sighted Man cannot foresee, much less prevent, so that the *Race is not always to the Swift, nor the Battle to the Strong*. If, therefore, the *Lord of Hosts who ruleth in Battle*, goes not forth with our Armies, 'tis in vain that we are so built up in our own Strength and Prowess, or gaud it in all our vast Appearances; for could we fill the Ocean with our Navies, or dry up Rivers with the Feet of our Hosts, were our Counsellors at home ever so wise and so watchful, or our Commanders abroad so skilful and valiant, he could soon blast all our towering Projects, and say to us as he did to *Edom of Old, Although thou exalt thyself as the Eagle, and though thou set thy Nest amongst the Stars, yet thence will I bring thee down.*

I have no Intention here to insinuate, but that the Success and Security of a Nation depend, in great Measure, upon the proper conducting of human Methods, and upon the Abilities and Integrity of those at the Helm. Magnanimity in the Prince, Wisdom in the Council-Chamber, and Unanimity in the Senate, are highly conducive, beyond Question, to those desirable Ends. These, indeed, are the Instruments which Heaven makes use of to succour a People withal; so that if we have not These amongst us, we are in as lost a Situation as *Sodom* was formerly without her *five Righteous*: But suppose we have These, they are still but Instruments, and, unless

modulated and guided by the Hand of Providence, have not Power enough to support the sinking Foundations of an abandoned Land. 'Tis therefore to think of something farther for procuring Success in our Affairs, than barely human Means, that we are met together in this Place.

The *Pagans* of old, used solemnly to consult their Oracles upon their commencing a War; the *Turks* on the same Occasion, have Recourse to their *Musti* or High-priest, and formerly, even amongst Christians, a consecrated Sword, or hallowed Banner from the Pontiff, was made use of to give a Sanction and Blessing to the Expedition. How much more reasonable then, as well as necessary, is it for us to consult the great Oracle of Heaven upon this Occasion, and to render ourselves capable of his Favour, by confessing and repenting of our Iniquities, and crying out with the Prophet in the Text: *O Lord, according to all thy Righteousness I beseech thee, let thy Anger and thy Fury be turned from thy City Jerusalem, thy holy Mountain; because for our Sins, and for the Iniquities of our Fathers, Jerusalem and thy People are become a Reproach to all that are about us.*

This Passage points out to us two Particulars, in the Behaviour of the Prophet, very worthy and becoming of our Imitation at this Juncture.

A FAST-SERMON.

3

The first of these is a sincere Confession of our Iniquities, and a frank Acknowledgment of the Reproach they have subjected us to.

The other is a Humiliation of ourselves before the Almighty, to implore his Pardon for those Iniquities, and his divine Influence to remove the fatal Consequences attending them.

With regard to both of these, we of this Age and Nation have as much Reason, I'm afraid, to follow the Prophet's Example, as any Nation or Age that live upon Record. If ever, therefore, it be allowable to drag out to publick View, the reigning Vices of the Times, and to brand 'em as they deserve, it is upon such an Occasion as the present, I think, that the Liberty may be craved.

Permit me then to be very plain and particular in this Respect; not that I would here attempt to give in a Muster-roll of all the Vices and Follies which prevail amongst us: That I doubt would take up more Time, were I barely to read it over, than you'd choose to allow me. I shall therefore only single out some of the most flagrant ones, such as have more immediately been the Occasion of rendering us the *Reproach* of all about us, and which require a more universal Humiliation and Repentance.

To begin then with the great Commanders that lead up the Van — Lo! Atheism and Irreligion stalking bare-fac'd thro' the Land,

and with gigantic Insolence scaling Heaven! not to wrest the Scepter indeed out of the Hands of the Deity, but to banish his very Existence thence, and reason him out of his Being. The Notions of a God who at first made, and still governs the World, of a real and eternal Distinction between Good and Evil, or of either a religious or moral State appointed to Man, are by many at this time openly thrown off, and gravely disavow'd. Some perhaps in past Ages have been infected with these poisonous Principles, or rather *No Principles*; but then they had Modesty enough to conceal their Shame; they skulk'd behind those Hills which they had pil'd up to invade the Throne of Heaven from, and their baneful Notions were, like Persons infected with the Plague, kept shut up from the Publick, and rag'd only in their own Bosoms. To broach Tenets of this flagitious Nature was always till now look'd upon as such an Intrenchment upon publick Decency, such a Violation of the Laws of the Country and such an Affront to the common Sense and Persuasion of Mankind, that no Champion of *Atheism* was hardy enough to be found who durst attempt it. But the more refin'd and daring Spirits of this Age scorn to shuffle, or mince the Matter. They think *David's Fool* a *Fool indeed*, that said *only* in his *Heart* there was *no God*; They undauntedly let their Tongues number them with the *unfaithful*,
and

A FAST-SERMON.

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and make use of all their Study, Wit and Parts, strenuously to defend what they thus boldly assert : They shew Skill and Management, as well as Valour, in this Mystery of Infidelity ; so that now, as once at *Corinth*, the World by Wisdom know no God.

Then, as to Christianity, and the whole Affair of Jesus Christ, That is now look'd on as a mere Romance ; so quite foreign to all Taste and Politeness that it is not to be born with : Many that will condescend to own the Being of a God, and the moral Obligations of natural Religion, will laugh at you, if you talk to 'em about *Jesus and the Resurrection*. And as the Enemies to Christianity at its first Appearance in the World, cloth'd its Publishers in the Skins of wild Beasts, that they might be worried to Death, so its modern Opposers clothe the Doctrines of it in a Fool's Coat, that it may be hooted out of the World. The Notions of a Saviour and an After-State of Heaven and Hell, and such kind of Things, are derided as the Dreams of the Night, the very *Flatus* of the Mind, mere Bugbears to frighten Fools and Children with, and now-a-days indeed they are scarce by Fools or Children believ'd : so that in this Respect, we are at present upon the same footing with Rome in *Juvenal's* Time.

*Esse aliquos Manes, & Subterranea Regna,
Et contum, & Stygio Ranas in gurgite nigras,
Atque*

*Atque unâ transire Vadum tot Millia Cymbæ
Nec pueri credunt —*

The Men of this Age have the Luck, however, to obey Scripture thus far, as to bring St. Peter's Prophecy to pass: *In the last Days*, says he, *there shall come Scoffers walking after their own Lusts*; and now they are come indeed; even in *Power and great Glory*.

The worldly-minded *Gadarenes*, we are told, drove their Saviour out of their Coasts to preserve their Swine, and, for a Purse of Silver, *Judas* sent him out of the World. But They had some Interest at Stake; They had some Temptation, tho' a poor one, for what they did; but for the Reputation of the Gallantry of his modern Enemies, They drive Him out of Heaven, and his Faith from the Earth, merely for the Bravery and Pleasure of doing it. O no! I beg their Pardon — They have *Friends* at least whose Interests are nearly concern'd in it, dear bosom Friends, their inmate Vices and darling Passions; The Pleasures and Advantages they expect from the *Covenant they have made with Death, and the Agreement they are at with Hell*, make them such Foes to Him who is a Foe to those.

The *Luxurious* who deify their Appetite, and run thro' the Universe of Creatures to furnish out Oblations to it, at the same time locking up their Breasts against all Sensations of

of Pity and Humanity for their necessitous Fellow-creatures, cannot bear to hear of a voluptuous *Dives* in Flames, or of a begging *Lazarus* in *Abraham's Bosom*.

The insatiate *Sensualist* who revels in loose Enjoyments, whose Vices anticipate the Business of the Tomb, reduce him to make his Bed in the Dark before he descends into the silent Chambers of the Grave, and to say to *Corruption*, *Thou art my Father*, before the *Worm* becomes his *Mother* and *Sister*, cannot but be uneasy at the thoughts of a Resurrection when his Self-corrupted Carcase must be publicly expos'd.

The *Treacherous* and *Guileful*, who like *Judas* betray their Friends with a Kiss, hug you close, only to trip you up, plot dark Villanies in fair Vizards, and plunder under the Disguises of smooth Words and false Arts, are mighty loth to think of appearing at a Place where all the Varnish of Hypocrisy shall be wash'd off, and every secret Piece of Knavery and Vice proclaim its Author.

The *Miser*, who screws, grinds, and racks all he has to do with, and grows more narrow in Soul, as he swells more in Substance; who hoards up his Riches 'till they become corrupted, his Garments till they are Moth-eaten, and his Gold and Silver till they are devoured with Rust; who stops the Circulation of Nature's Bounty, and seals up the Influence of her noblest Treasures; who,
whilst

whilst the Riotous and Luxurious, with the unjust Steward, waste their Masters Goods, like the unprofitable Servant, hides and buries his Lord's Talent: He, and no wonder, would sneak away, if he could, from the Inquest of that Court, where not only the Principal, but Interest will be demanded of him, and where the Darkness he kept his Wealth in before, will be allotted him as his only, his eternal Portion.

Thus Infidelity has overspread the Land, not because Men cannot believe, but because they will not practise. Did a Man acknowledge a God or a future State, or give his Assent to the Doctrines of Christ's Religion, This, alas! would oblige him to condemn some beloved of his Soul, cut him off from some darling Pursuits in which his Happiness was placed, and like the impertinent Prophet to the King of *Israel*, *Prophecy no good concerning him, but evil continually.*

Will Reason then under such Disadvantages ever be heard? Will Arguments, when such pleasing Facts are against them, ever convince? No, no, the Prophet may go about his Business: The Man can never acknowledge That to be true, which the Satisfactions he has plac'd his supreme Felicity in, make him ardently wish should be false. Thus, Reason is dethroned by Passion, and Men become *speculative* Infidels, only because they will be *practical* Ones.

Had

Had our great Wits and fine Gentlemen lived in those good Pagan Times, when Vice was the Worship of the World, when Lewdness had its Temples, Theft its Deity, and Drunkenness its God; when they might have rioted with Devotion, been most God-like in Wantonness and every thing that was profligate, they would not, I dare say, have been then Atheists or Infidels. It would not then have been their Business to call Revelation in question, when it evidently made so well for their Practice. They would not have fail'd to have animated a Faith as much as possible, which informed them that by indulging their own sensual Satisfactions they would still more resemble the divine Natures they adored.

It may here be asked, perhaps, that though its being the infinite Concern of Vice that there should be no God or After-reckoning is the Cause of Mens rejecting the Evidence for either, how does This account for the great Prevalency of Infidelity, and open Profession of it in the present Age, beyond what was known in former Times? The common Vices which Mankind are prone to, have been pretty much the same, you'll say, ever since they carry'd about 'em the same Passions, and were obnoxious to the same Temptations, how came it to pass then, that they did not produce the same Effects? A full Answer to this Question is but too obvious, which is
this.

this, That though Men might be prone to the same Vices in former Ages, yet they were never proud of them till the present. They might practise them, but they did not boast of them as they do now, did not dignify them, nor dress them up as gay and honourable. Vice therefore, the Foundation of Infidelity, being set upon a Hill, the Superstructure must of course appear the more conspicuous, and brave Heaven the bolder.

And now, *this Vice* of all others, must contribute to make us a *Reproach to those about us*, as it tends directly to the Subversion of all Government and Order. Were the Fear of God, the Sense of Virtue, and the Apprehensions of a future State, to be banished the World, it must immediately return into the wild Confusions of its original Chaos: And at the same time that the Bonds of Religion were broke asunder, the Bonds of Allegiance and Society would be dissolved. This the Infidel himself acknowledges; for he will very gravely tell you, that Gods and Religions were only invented by the secular Power to keep Men the better in Awe, and restrain them Here by the Dread of an Hereafter. What a good and loving Subject then is He, by the by, who would unlink that Chain which he himself thinks so necessary?

In proportion, therefore, as Infidelity prevails amongst us, the Sinews of our Government, which are made up of religious Ties, must

must be weaken'd and loos'd, and consequently we must become a *Reproach to all that are round about us.*

But this is not all, for even amongst those who profess that they know God, and acknowledge his Providence; nay, go still farther, and with a God and Providence acknowledge a revealed Religion too, and the Christian in particular, as most worthy of the Dispensation of Heaven and the Faith of a reasonable Creature, yet with all this Faith and Knowledge about them, how little Regard do they now-a-days shew to the Worship of the one or the Doctrines of the other. They are warm and alive indeed for their particular Persuasions, with the Frost of the Grave at the same time upon their Devotions, and whilst they quarrel for the Fringes of Religion, the Coat itself is carelessly thrown aside. They have an Angel's Form and Voice, but then the Cloven-foot is at the Bottom, which always leads them from the House of God; so far are they from paying their Tribute of Prayer or Praises to their Creator, in their Families or their Closets, that the Church itself is never favoured with their Company. Amongst the Great and Polite, it is look'd on as vulgar and ungentile ever to be seen at such a Place, unless it be to qualify for some Post of Interest or Honour. No, the Sabbath is the Day they hold their Assemblies at home upon, not with God's Book, but Satan's, in their
Hand;

Hand ; and pass the sacred Hours, not in praising their Maker, but cursing their Cards. Whilst many of the more busy and mercantile Part of Mankind, instead of setting the Day apart for the Service of their Creator, make it Joint-Labourer with the rest of the Week. They retire indeed into their Closets to settle their Accounts, but 'tis the Account of their Cash, not of their Sins.

Men of all Degrees are now indeed *ashamed* of Duty. They take pains to let you see that they spend the Hours of publick Worship in something quite foreign to all Worship, and will suffer you to tax them with employing such Hours ill, if you cannot upbraid them with employing them well. It is thought, among the refined part of Mankind, an Imperfection to want a Relish for, or just Taste in the politer Arts and Sciences : Hence Painting, Musick, and Poetry, meet with such a favourable Reception in the World, and gain Admittance into every one's Closet : And yet Devotion, which principally distinguishes us from tasteless Brutes, creates in us inward Proportion and Symmetry, sheds over our Faculties true Harmony and Comeliness, and which would therefore of Consequence furnish us out the highest Taste of Life and Manners, is not only neglected, but excommunicated both from our Closets and Thoughts.

And

And now this almost universal Negligence amongst us in the publick Worship of our Country must necessarily have a great Share in making us a *Reproach* to our Neighbours. Whether we are more profligate than they are, I will not take upon me to say, but this I may venture to affirm, that we are more profane and irreligious. They at least keep Terms with the *Form* of Religion, whatever they do with the *Power* of it; But We will not submit even to That. 'Twould be happy for us now, if we had but the Religion of Hypocrisy amongst us; and surely it must be an Age which has something very uncommon in it, that can turn Hypocrisy into a Virtue.

Not but that we have amongst us some Hypocrites, and of the worst Sort too; Cheats in Notion and Principle, as well as in Practice: who look upon common Honesty and Religion in the same profitable Light, and pay an extreme Regard to them, as far as they advantage their own Ease or Emolument. Who have no manner of Quarrel with Piety or Morality, but will pretend a very high Friendship to both, in order to make use of them, when a proper Occasion shall offer. Who are sure to be continually preaching up Honesty and Godliness, go regularly to Church, stand up at the Creed, and bow at the Name of *Jesus* too, when they have any Prospect of serving their own Interest the better by it; and

and who, if they should happen to have any Business in *China*, would compliment the Idol *Fo* with the same Attendance and Respect.

Thus these Men break the Commandments, under the Cloke of a sound Creed; and travel on the high Road to Hell, with Directions to Heaven at their Fingers Ends. But this being a Vice not so peculiar to our own Nation or Age, I here only notice it by way of *Parentthesis*.

Next to the above Vices of Infidelity and Irreligion, march up Luxury and Voluptuousness in various Shapes.

The first in the Band, is the *Man whose Belly is his God*, and who, not content to worship it as other Idols were worshipped, which had generally some single Creature appropriated for a Sacrifice, ranges through the whole Latitude of Beings to seek out Meat-Offerings and Drink-Offerings for it. As to the latter of these, Intemperance in Liquor, I must own that the present Age is not so justly chargeable with it as former Times have been. But how so? O, why our Professors in Luxury have refined more upon it: Too much Liquor, they tell you, drowns the Appetite, and washes off the Sagacity of the Palate; high Eating they have happily found to be the highest Indulgence, and spiced Sauces more to be desired, than spiced Cups. At the same time the honest simple Food, which God and Nature

Nature design'd for the Support of Life, is either entirely rejected, or tortur'd into a Poison; whilst nothing but foreign Rarities and Compositions will go down. Other Lands are happily plunder'd of their Delicacies, and their delicate Preparers of them too, to furnish out the Tables and flatter the Palates of the once *plain-eating* as well as *plain-dealing Britons*. Nay, to such a Height is the Mystery of Luxury now carried, that not a Viand must appear at the polite Man's Banquet, that any one can discover of what Ingredients it is compounded; whilst the Cost, at the same time, is run up to such a Profusion, that He, whom the *Roman* Satyrist so severely lashes for giving six thousand Sesterces for a Fish, was a Trifler in Prodigality to our sumptuous Countrymen. But even this is not sufficient, there must be Barbarities, it seems, as well as Dainties, to sauce the Entertainment; not satisfied with the Flesh and Blood of Creatures doom'd for their Repasts, they must inflict Whips and Racks on them before they die, and kill them by piecemeal—only, truly, that they may the better claim their Seat in the Eye, or sit smoother upon the Taste. The Kitchens of the Great and Luxurious are now become Dens in which the most horrid Cruelties are transacted, and which are not only *stained with the Blood*, but *resound with the Cries* of Creatures expiring in Tortures. Shocking, outrageous Luxury! But 'tis in vain to preach

to the Belly, which, as *Cato* observes, has no Ears. Besides Mode and Fashion consecrate the most inhuman as well as most absurd Practices, and no body is ashamed of doing what most People, under the same Circumstances, do. With so much Expence, with so much Anxiety, and with so much Vice, do they gorge their Desires, and, in *Solomon's* Phrase, make their Souls enjoy Good.

And what is the Good they enjoy from this unnatural Jumble of contradictory Ingredients, this licentious Medley of Intemperance? Why, good Fevers, good Gouts, Dropsies, and Apoplexies; any thing but good Health, and good Sense. Whilst the abstemious Man, like the temperate *Socrates* during the Plague of *Athens*, lives free from Infection, and feels no Attack from those Ministers of Death which lurk in Ambush amidst the Voluptuary's Dishes.

Next to the Luxury of the Table, comes the Luxury of Dress, which is carried to full as criminal an Excess amongst us. Nature's whole Wardrobe must be rif'd, the Beauties of the Universe deflower'd, and the Art and Sweat too of every Country, but our own, employ'd to furnish out the Gaities and Deckings of our Pride. Nothing that is fantastical in Fashion, or expensive in Purchase amongst our Neighbours, but must immediately be part of our Garb; whilst nothing that is the Produce or Manufactory of our native Isle,

He, be it ever so rich, or ever so reasonable, can lay claim to our Encouragement; if 'tis *English*, 'tis enough, no *Englishman* can bear it. But how must Men of Fortune spend their Estates, you'll perhaps say, they cannot eat and drink out all their Income. Why, truly they often seem willing enough to do so, and, I believe, the Experiment sometimes succeeds. But is there no such thing then as charitable Uses, or laudable Objects of Bounty? May not the Service of Religion, or the Propagation of Knowledge, Arts and Sciences thro' the Land, justly lay claim to some Share of their Affluence? Would not such a generous and rational use of their Fortune give more Lustre to their Reputations, and create 'em much more Regard and Admiration than a gaudy Suit, or the Glimmerings of a Pebble? Yes, but you'll say farther, perhaps, that a rich Attire is necessary to support the Distinctions of Rank and Condition. Truly, very little so: There is a much nobler Way of doing it than this. Richness in the Qualities of the Mind will better answer that Purpose than in the Trappings of the Body. Let a Man of Fortune and Title wear a better Temper, a nobler Disposition, a finer Understanding, and a more shining Honour; this will distinguish and raise him more above the Vulgar, as well as be of much more Advantage and Honour to his Country, than being trick'd out in the En-

trails of foreign Worms, the Skins of foreign Beasts, or the Craft of foreign Looms.

And now it is not much to be wonder'd at, I think, if this *aping* all the Follies and Vices of those about us have made us become a Scorn and a *Reproach* to them. Affectation even of Beauties or Excellencies of any kind fits but very awkwardly upon a Man, and is sure to render him contemptible to the Person he strives to resemble. 'Tis a palpable Acknowledgment of a Superiority in those we would imitate, and at the same time is a warping and distorting of Nature, who is sure ever to resent her being put out of Course, and to take Revenge on those who are guilty of doing it. Indeed, all Affectation is a direct Violence offer'd to the Intention of Providence; and, as *Tully* observes, is like the Crime of the Giants, a flat Rebellion against Heaven. And now, how mean, how scanty, how beggarly and effeminate, must we appear in the Eyes of those round about us, whilst we raise all our Figure out of their Blemishes and Deformities, and absurdly glory in what is their Shame.

Thus we *eat, drink, and dress* ourselves into *Foreigners*, and are naturaliz'd to them, as far as their Vices and Follies can naturalize us, for we are so kind as not to rob them of one of their good Qualities. Thus *Britain* that was fashion'd to stand alone from amongst the Nations, and is swath'd in from the Continent,

continent, having the Ocean for a Girdle, is now fit only to be a Province to it. 'Twas upon Account of the *Israelites* being so dotingly fond of the *Babylonians* with respect to these things, that God threaten'd by the Mouth of the Prophet *Ezekiel* to give them up into their Hand.

Attendant upon Luxury, and Offspring of it, behold Venality and Corruption; all That noble Integrity of Nature, That honest Simplicity of Soul, and inflexible Resolution of Mind, which was formerly the glorious Characteristick of a *Briton*, is in this Age entirely banished from among us. *England* is now become a Land of Auction, where most Mens Consciences are set up to Sale, and where neither Favour, Friendship, Affinity, or Party, have one Grain of Influence; but the best Bidder is made Master of the Commodity. Thus, according as the Market runs, we are *Frenchmen*, *Italians*, *Germans*, *Spaniards*, any thing but true *Englishmen*. And must not this now make us the *Reproach* of all about us, when they find we are Tools, that they may purchase, whenever they have Occasion for us, and that we voluntarily subject ourselves to that State of Slavery, which it has been always deem'd the highest Reproach to the Christian World to have impos'd upon the barbarous *Ethiop*?

Besides, from this baneful Root spring many destructive Factions and Divisions among
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ourselves.

ourselves. For our Disputes and Strugglings, now-a-days, are not, as formerly, for the Preservation of the Religion, the Liberty or Commerce of our Country. The Question is not, whether we shall have Popery or Protestantism? whether we shall be Slaves, or a free People? But how we, each of us, shall *fill the Basket* — Who shall have This Place, or That Pension in the State, who This Dignity, or That *Sinecure* in the Church, or who This Monopoly, or fraudulent Advantage in Traffick? The *Love of our Country*, once the *Briton's* darling Passion, for which he would scorch under the Line, freeze under the Pole, or wade thro' Seas of Blood, has now lost all its Force among us; and Thirst of Liberty, and publick Good, cease to be an *Englishman's* governing Principles. By this Means we are become not only a *Reproach*, but an easy *Prey* likewise to all about us; and had not God's Mercies been over his *Attributes*, as well as his *Works*, his just Vengeance had doom'd us such long before this Time.

Thus I have performed my Promise, in pointing out to you some of the most singular and modish Vices of the Times, which have made us the *Reproach* and Contempt of our Neighbours; but were I to reckon up all the other more general and common ones, which, in conjunction with those, render us the *Reproach* of Heaven, at the same time, how large would the Sum of them be! Such gross
Immora-

Immoralities, Cheats and Perjuries, Oaths and Imprecations, Riots and Impurities, in short, all those Guilts which make the last Times perilous, lord it so thro' the Land ; while the Face of Things is so vicious in every Order, Sex, and Degree, that—But I am very loth to dwell longer upon so disagreeable a Subject. It has been far from a Gratification, to have said even what I have already said upon it ; but 'twas necessary to lay open our Sores, in order the better to come at the Cure of them, and if I have done it with a rough Hand, I was, in a manner, compelled to it by the Malignity of the Distempers. And now, methinks, gladly would I find out some Virtues amongst us, some Weight to cast into the opposite Scale. But where must I go to seek for them ? Banishment has been long denounced against those Enemies to Indulgence : Some were accused of being mean, poor-spirited sneaking Qualities, others of being melancholy and pedantick, and others, again, of being unmanly and irrational, and were outlaw'd accordingly ; whilst their contrary Vices usurp their Places, and their very Names too. To follow our own Humour, is called *Freedom of Mind* ; to give a Loose to our Appetites is termed *Happiness* ; to prosecute our Passions, *Honour* and *Fortitude*, and to be unrestrained by Truth or Justice, *Liberty* and *Wisdom*.

And now after taking this Prospect of ourselves, need any of us be called upon to follow the Example of the Prophet, in the *second Particular* observed from the Text, *viz.* A Humiliation of ourselves before the Almighty, to implore his Pardon for our Iniquities, and his divine Influence to remove the fatal Consequences attending them.

God's Judgments are abroad on the Earth: A Cup of Indignation is mingled for some to drink of, and what have we to say why it should not be for us?

The *Crisis* of our Nation seems to be drawing on apace, our Maladies are at the utmost Height they can go; and must soon terminate, either in our Cure or Dissolution. Now then is the Time, if ever, to look to ourselves, and guard, if possible, against the impending Ruin. Let us lay hold of this Opportunity, to humble ourselves before Heaven, and let our Humiliation and Repentance bear some Proportion to the Quality and Degree of our Offences. Let us, like the *Seed of Israel*, *separate ourselves from all Strangers*, discard *their Vices*, and be divorced from *their Vanities*. Let us execute an Act of Indignation upon ourselves for our Transgressions, whilst our Prayers and Intercessions are employed, in the mean time, to wrest the Sword out of the avenging Hand.

Let us search and try our Ways, diligently turn our Eyes inward on our Hearts, and be cautious,

cautious, lest there be some undiscovered Blemish in us, some *accursed Thing bidden*, which either Business, Partiality, or Pleasure has caused us to overlook. For unless Purity of Heart, and Reformation of Life, accompany our Contrition and Intercessions, we may, like the *Priests of Baal*, cut and hack ourselves, and call *upon our God till Noon*, without any Return, or Sign of being heard.

And when we are thoroughly humbled for our own Faults, and reformed, let us be likewise humbled for, and sincerely mourn over, the Vices of the Nation. Thus, and thus only, can we hope to secure ourselves against whatever Tribulations may be coming on the Land. We find in the Prophecy of *Ezekiel*, that God commanded a Mark to be set on the Foreheads of the Men, that sighed and cried for the Abominations of *Jerusalem*, that the Executioners of his Wrath might pass by them, and spare them.

Josephus reports of the *Jewish Priests*, that when *Pompey's Army* rushed abruptly into the Temple upon them, they neither laid aside the Sacrifice, nor performed it hastily or timorously. So if we do but our Duty, and are employed as we should be, we shall remain undaunted and composed, tho' *Ammon* and *Amalek*, the *Philistines* and *those of Tyre*, combine against us.

And this too is the best, the sole Course we can take, to draw down God's Mercy and
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Forbearance on the Land, and to avert those Judgments which its Iniquities merit.

War is a common Instrument which the Hand of Providence makes use of both to *punish* and to *reclaim* a vicious People. A Multitude of Instances might be produced from Scripture to support this Assertion, — such as God's bringing the *Host of the King of Assyria* upon the wicked *Manasseh and his People*; The several *Bands of Enemies* he sent against *Jebojakin*. His stirring up *Hadad the Edomite* against *Solomon*; and his employing the *Medes*, under the Conduct of *Cyrus*, for the Destruction of *Babylon*.

If this then be often the Case, as it most certainly is, and if we are the People before pictured out, as I am afraid we are, what mighty Reasons have we to apprehend, and tremble for ourselves, lest *Iniquity should be our Ruin*? What then have we to do? How obviate? How avert? What Anchor lay hold of? What *Asylum* have recourse to? Indeed, I know of none, but instant *Reformation*. Not to be the *same People* any longer, and then we shall not have the same to dread. To catch the present critical Moment, and be *reclaimed* before we are *punished*.

And in order to this; let us no longer countenance, or encourage those *foreign Ministers of Luxury, Foppery, and Voluptuousness* which now swarm amongst us, and like *Hannibal's Numidians* in the *Roman Army*, at the
same

same time, *betray* us to Ruin, and *infiel* it upon us: But let us be a *Land* of our own People, and not bear to see a *Latian* or *Gallic* Town in *Augusta*.

Let us be no longer *Infidels* through *Immorality*, but be *Profelytes* to *Heaven* and not to our *Vices*.

Let us no longer pretend to *Piety* only for *Profit*, consecrate *Iniquity* with a sacred Name, and *talk of God* that we may *act the Devil* the better; but be *Righteous* through the *Love of Righteousness*, and *Good* through the *Love of Goodness*.

Let this Day be the Birth-day both of our Repentance and Reformation — Let the Cries of our *Contrition* drown those of our *Vices*: Let us *return unto the Lord*, that he may *return to us*, and let us secure him to us with *St. Peter's Chain*; by *adding to Faith* *Virtue*, and to *Virtue Knowledge*, and to *Knowledge Temperance*, and to *Temperance Patience*, and to *Patience Godliness*, and to *Godliness brotherly Kindness*, and to *brotherly Kindness Charity*.

Thus *Glory* shall, once more, *dwell in our Land*, and we shall be ever preserved in *Peace and Virtue* here, and be made eternally happy hereafter.



A CHARITY-SERMON.

ROMANS xiii. 8.

*Owe no Man any thing but to love one another :
for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the
Law.*

TH O' the *Jews* were in many Respects
a very singular People, and differ'd widely
from the rest of the World in their Peculia-
rities and Distinctions, yet they had This in
common with the Religious and Philosophers
of other Nations; that all the different Sects
among them had some peculiar Maxims and
Customs, by which they were distinguish'd
from one another. Our Saviour's Example is
a Proof, that these Distinctions were both ne-
cessary and laudable. For even he himself,
upon his first appearing in publick, fix'd up-
on this great, this truly noble Badge of mu-
tual Charity and Benevolence, and pointed
it out as the proper Mark and Characteristick
of his Followers. *By this shall all Men know
that you are my Disciples if you love one another.*
And in pursuance of this general Institution,
we

we find his Apostles taking every Opportunity to recommend and inforce this indispensable Duty : Assuring us, that without this, all our Pretences to Religion are frivolous and vain, that the Love of our Fellow-Creatures is the only true Cement which can unite us to our good Creator; That Faith and Hope, however great and necessary Graces, are still inferior to this, and nothing valuable without it. — In short, that it is the Sum, the Abridgement, the fulfilling of the whole Law : *Owe no Man any thing, but to love one another ; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the Law.* Now the present Discourse on this Text shall be employ'd, first, in explaining the Nature of this Love ; the Object of it ; and how the Law is fulfilled by it. — Next, in considering the Obligation we are under to the Practice of this Duty. — And lastly, making a suitable Application of it to the present Occasion. When the Almighty in infinite Goodness created Mankind, He implanted in their Souls several natural Tendencies and Affections for the better Preservation of their Beings, and Security of their Happiness. Amongst these, the social Passions, or the Inclinations towards Society, Conversation and Friendship, are the most powerful and useful. Now in this Herding or Intercourse amongst Men, to which they are so strongly carried by the very Frame of their Nature, there cannot possibly arise either Pleasure or Benefit, without mutual Charity,
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Good-will and Benevolence; so that this Love which is here, and in many other Places of Scripture so strictly enjoyn'd, is nothing more than what is natural to our very Constitutions, and was originally implanted in our Souls. It is that sincere and rational Affection and Good-will towards others, which flows from that friendly and social Principle in the Mind, and which inclines us to rejoice in, and promote the Happiness of others; and to endeavour at relieving their Evils and Misfortunes. It is that gentle and amiable Temper which prompts us to a Fellow-feeling with others in their Necessities; and to a Humanity and Bounty in our Behaviour towards them; that honourable Principle which makes us tender of the good Name and Reputation of our Neighbour, and at the same time desirous of his good Opinion and Love; to pursue Friendship and follow Peace with all Men. The happy Influence of this Temper extends to every Circumstance and Relation in Life. The benevolent Man is disposed to make use of all external Advantages in such a manner, as shall contribute to the Good of others, as well as his own Satisfaction.

This good Principle in *Superiors*, discovers itself in a kind and compassionate Conduct towards the Poor and the Dependent; and in *Inferiors*, it is manifested by a punctual Discharge of Obedience and Gratitude. It is not the Result of Interest or Affinity alone, nor

A CHARITY-SERMON.

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is it confined to a particular Community or Communion, but is extended thro' the Universe, and makes the Love of ourselves the Measure of our Love to all Mankind. Not that this Love is required to be equal, or in the same Degree towards all. No, there are nearer and more powerful Degrees of it, as the Objects stand nearer to us in Relation; such is the Affection due from Parents to their Children, the Gratitude of the Obligated to his Benefactor, the mutual good Offices of Friend to Friend, and the well-grounded Esteem of one Acquaintance to another; but last of all, to excel in this Virtue, and crown the Business of perfect Charity, universal Benevolence and Assistance, as far as in our Power, must be manifested to all Men, even to our very Enemies. For tho' 'tis both reasonable and natural for us to shew a stronger Affection to those who are more strongly allied to us in the Respects above-mentioned; yet there is a Proportion of that Affection to be diffused throughout the World: like that Principle of Gravitation in the Works of Nature, which tho' it increases in Strength the nearer Bodies are to one another, yet extends itself in some Measure through the whole Universe, and acts upon the most remote Parts of Matter.

We come in the next Place to enquire, how this Virtue of Christian Charity can be said to be the fulfilling of all the Law. The Commentators

mentators upon this Text insist, that it means only the Duties contained in the second Table of the Commandments which relate to our Neighbour.

I own myself to be of a different Opinion, for by that emphatical Expression *of all the Law*, the Apostle here undoubtedly means the whole Duties we owe both to God and to our Neighbour, and that this Virtue is entitled to the Preeminence here given it, will be manifest from observing as before, that the Precept includes Goodness and Charity, as well as Justice. Now that which we strictly call Piety, or our Duty to our Creator, is the Effect of a benevolent and charitable Temper. For the Nature of Man is so constituted, that every good Affection in us implies the Love of that Affection itself. Thus to be righteous, is a Proof that we are Lovers of Righteousness; to be good that we are Lovers of Goodness. Now as we have no clear Conception of any moral positive Attribute in the supreme Being, but what may be resolv'd into Goodness, the Love of that God, as a Being perfectly good, is no more than the Love of perfect Goodness, and naturally flows from a benevolent and loving Disposition: So that this Virtue may be said in the strictest Sense to include in it all that is due from us with respect to our Creator.

And that it likewise comprehends in it all we owe to our Fellow-Creatures, is surely as undeniable

undeniable. For as nothing can be of any Consequence to a Creature but Happiness, we can therefore owe no Man any thing, but to promote his Happiness to the utmost of our Abilities, and therefore a Disposition and Endeavour to do Good to all with whom we have to do, is a Discharge of all the Obligations we are under to them. And as far as Temperance, Sobriety, and all other Virtues have any Influence upon the Welfare and Prosperity of Mankind, so far it is manifest, that those Virtues will be produc'd by the Love of our Neighbour, and the contrary Vices thereby prevented. Thus, I presume, it is evident, that the common Virtues or Vices of Mankind, may be traced up to this just and social Disposition, or the want of it; and thus Morality and Religion, Virtue and Piety, will necessarily coincide in the same Point. This is the short Test and sure Proof of universal Goodness. The whole Duty of a Christian is nothing but Integrity varied through the several Acts, Kinds and Degrees of it; and Works of Piety towards our Creator, with Justice and Charity to our Fellow-Creatures, are the natural Offspring of that Integrity. 'Tis this exalted Disposition towards universal Goodness and Righteousness, that must consecrate all our Actions, and stamp a Currency on our religious Offices, as well as Virtues of every kind. For what is Mercy without this, but Self-Love? What Meekness and Patience,

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'but

but either Indolence or Cowardise? What Humility but Diffimulation, or what Beneficence but Vain-glory? What Devotion but dwelling in the Porch of Religion? and what Zeal but a fatal Meteor, which makes Men like *Samson's* Foxes with Firebrands tied to 'em, shining Plagues to their Fellow-Creatures? Unless, therefore, there be a conspicuous Regard to this Rule in our Intercourse with Men, the most glorious Pretences of Piety towards God, signify nothing, either with God or Men: A mighty Zeal in disputing and contending about Opinions without regard to Equity, Justice, and Charity, is but a kind of religious Knight-errantry, and Men encounter only Wind-Mills and Pageants. They neither honour God, profit the World, or procure Reputation to themselves. No; *pure Religion before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and Widows in their Affliction.* So that when Men shall highly pretend to Devotion, and yet appear not only disingenuous and unjust, but unmerciful, cruel and sanguinary too, an indifferent Person would be tempted to be of that poor *Indian's* Mind, who would not go to Heaven when he was told that such sort of Men were there.

In saying this, I do not in the least intend to derogate from the Merit of either Faith or Devotion, but only to shew that however valuable or great they are, they will avail us nothing without the Practice of this universal Justice and Charity to one another. All things

in Religion cannot be of the same Value. Practice is the End of all the rest; therefore unwilling Errors in Faith are not to be set on the same Foot with practical Iniquity. Vicious Actions are the greatest Heresy, and a good and upright Life the truest Orthodoxy.

To act up to this Rule, therefore, is the highest Obedience to the Will of our Creator, the highest Agreement with our own social Constitution, and highest Benefit to the Peace and Tranquillity of Mankind, and consequently is the fulfilling of the Law. And what further Obligations we lie under to put this Duty in practice, will appear from considering in the second Place, that all Nations are made of one Blood, and are allied in their Passions and Faculties. We have the same Desires to satisfy, and generally the same Pleasure in satisfying them. All Mankind is, as it were, one great Being divided into several Parts, every Part having the same Properties and Affections with another; and as we desire Accommodations for our own Support and Pleasure, so if we would leave Nature to its original Bias, we should wish and endeavour to procure the same Conveniencies for others; and whoever does not, is guilty of acting contrary to the Principles of his Nature, and committing a Violence on his own Constitution.

And as the Community of Nature, so likewise the Good of Society, requires this Duty at our Hands; God has design'd Man a sociable Creature,

ture, and to this End hath sent him into the World weak and defenceless; so that without the Kindness and Assistance of one another we are not able to subsist. As the Strength and Perfection of the natural Body arises from the due Connexion and Adherence of its Parts, so the civil Body is strengthen'd and perfected when its Members are join'd together with the Ligaments of Love. In the regular and uniform Observance of this Precept consists that universal Justice, which is the Perfection of all Virtues, the Beauty of all Actions, and the Glory and Advantage of every rational Creature. The Motions of the heavenly Bodies are not so regular and harmonious, nor the Beauty or Influence of 'em so ornamental and beneficial to the Creation, as this would be conducive to the Happiness of Mankind: It would make every one a Benefactor, a Friend, and a good Angel to his Fellow-Creatures; and as the Practice of this Virtue contributes very much to our outward Security and Welfare, so it gives us the principal Means and Power of Self-Enjoyment. For if the Pleasures of the Mind are allow'd to be greater than those of the Body, (as they certainly are) then whatever can create in us a constant Series of mental Enjoyments, is more conducive to our Happiness than all the Gratifications and Pleasures of Sense; and that the social and charitable Affections duly establish'd and cherish'd in us will produce the highest Satisfaction in the

the Mind, there is but little Occasion, I think, to prove. Every one who has experienc'd the Condition of the Soul under a lively Affection of Bounty, Generosity, Pity, Succour, or any thing else of the humane good-natur'd kind, has had sufficient Proofs of it from his own Sensation. He who has very little Knowledge of human Nature is sensible, what Rapture the Mind perceives when it is touch'd in this generous and friendly Way; nay, the very outward Features and Signs which attend this Joy, are more ardent and expressive than those which accompany any other: A charitable Disposition adds a Lustre to the very Eye, and fits smiling on the Cheek. To reward real Merit, and to relieve real Distress, as they are God-like Virtues, so are they God-like Pleasures likewise: For what is there upon Earth that affords Matter of such a refin'd and exalted a Delight, as the Exercise of social Benignity and Liberality. We thus enjoy Good by Communication, receive it from others by way of Reflexion, and are the better ourselves for all the Benefits we confer on our Neighbours.

The charitable Person, when his Fortune bears any Proportion to the Largeness of his Mind, is the great and universal Remedy against the Calamities of Life. Now to be able in some Measure to remove Want, Ignorance, Pain, and Diseases out of the World; to make the Minds of the Needy more cheerful, their Bodies more serviceable, and their Understandings more en-

larg'd: To be thus a Father to the fatherless, Liberty to the Captive, and, if not Health, yet Care and Refreshment to the Sick and the Maim'd; this, I say, must certainly be an exquisite Gratification to a well-dispos'd Mind. And as the Satisfaction arising from this happy Temper of Mind is superior to any other Pleasure, so it is likewise more lasting. The Pleasure of a charitable Action keeps us Company all along both in this World and the next; 'tis turn'd, as it were, into the very Substance of the Soul, and is as immortal as the Will from whence it proceeded; and even at last, when that critical Moment shall come, when we must render up our Shares in the Book of Life, and pay the last great Debt to Nature, the charitable Man will walk fearless thro' the Valley of Death, being prepar'd to give an Answer to the Questions which shall be put to him about the Poor and the Afflicted, the Hungry and the Naked, the Sick and the Imprison'd; In a word, the Pleasure the benevolent Man is entertain'd with here, and the Reward promis'd him hereafter, is so great, that, properly speaking, the *Reliev'd* are the Benefactors, and those that *relieve* lie under the greater Obligation. Such then are our Inducements, to the due Discharge of this Precept, whereby we shall fulfil the great Law of our Nature, answer the Purpose of our coming into the World, and receive an inestimable Reward at our going out, even an

Entrance

Entrance into the everlasting Mansions of our heavenly Father.

And now, what has been said of the Duty and the many Advantages of Charity in general, is so very applicable to the present Occasion, that I doubt not but you have prevented me in this Respect, and already resolved to make a generous Use of it. As to the particular Branch of this Christian Exercise which now presents itself to us, in these necessitous Infants and destitute Orphans, there is something in it so affecting, so attractive, and which brings so powerful a Recommendation along with it, that none but the steeled and callous Heart, which cannot be pierced by another's Want, or melt at another's Woe, can possibly resist the generous Impulse. Their Youth, their Necessities, and their Innocence, plead jointly in their Behalf; and these are Calls which must more effectually open the truly charitable Breast, than the most laboured Acts of Persuasion or affected Clamours and Complaints could do, and at the same time more conspicuously discover the Nobleness and Generosity of his Soul who readily complies with them. For can any thing be more noble and generous than to relieve the Indigent and Distress'd, to single out the Unhappy from whom no Returns can be expected, for the Object of our Favours; to esteem a Creature's being friendless as a Recommendation to our Friendship, his Incapacity of struggling thro' the

World as a Motive for our assisting him in it; in a word, to consider these Circumstances of Disadvantage which are too generally the Cause of Neglect and Contempt, as a Reason to us for helping him forward; this, I say, is that Humanity which is peculiarly becoming a rational Creature, and is the lovely Offspring of a noble and superior Mind, which, above all, rejoiceth in promoting the Glory of God, and the Good of Mankind, by being instrumental in sowing the Seeds of Virtue and Religion in the Minds of his Fellow-Creatures, where, otherwise, there would have sprung up nothing but Ignorance and Idleness, Impiety and Dishonesty, with all those Branches of Misery and Mischief which constantly sprout from those poisonous Stocks. These are things of such evident Use, of so confess'd an Excellence, that it would be an Affront to the Understandings of such a Congregation as this is, to insist on them any longer. I shall therefore apply myself to you, little Children, whose Cause I have here been pleading, and charge you, for God's sake, and your own, to remember that ye are under the highest Obligations to make due Returns of Gratitude to your generous Benefactors, and Thanksgiving to Heaven for raising them up, by making a good Use of the Blessing ye thereby enjoy; by being humble, tractable, and submissive to your Masters; by shewing Diligence in your Learning, Purity in your Behaviour, Piety in your Offices

Offices of Devotion, and, by maintaining the Innocence of your present State, and keeping yourselves *unspotted from the World*: Never whilst ye are now young, herding with others of your own Age, who having not enjoy'd the Advantage of a Christian Education like you, or being led away by a vicious and corrupt Disposition, are idle, profligate, and abandon'd; Abusers of God's Name, Profaners of his Sabbath, Defrauders of their Neighbours, Revilers of their Betters, neither fearing God nor regarding Men; fly, I say, such Companions, as you would the Plague. This is the very Gate to Ruin in this World, and eternal Misery in that to come.

This would be a sure Means of undoing all that your bountiful Benefactors have been doing for you, which would make the Crime so much the more hainous, and the Condemnation more terrible, as it would be a Discouragement to that noble Charity which you are reaping the Benefit of: But if the Light instilled into you be turned to Darknes, how great will that Darknes be? But I hope *better Things of you, tho' I thus speak*, and that when grown more in Years ye come abroad in the World, ye will retain a perpetual Sense of the Mercies now conferr'd on you, and that by Industry, by Sobriety, by Meekness, by Decency of Speech, by Cleanliness of Habit, and a strict Obedience to the Laws of Christianity which ye now learn, ye will convince the World, that the Institution
of

of this Charity is greatly beneficial and truly laudable. Whatever way of Life may fall to your Lot, embrace it contentedly, and pursue it indefatigably; not picking and culling and setting up for something above your Birth and Station, but labouring to make good Husbandmen, good Mariners, or good Servants, according to your several Situations or Appointments. Hoping and trusting that ye will comply with these Injunctions, I shall conclude with applying once more to your Benefactors: The Scripture tells us *that the Rich and the Poor meet together, but the Lord is the Maker of them All*. Since then we are all of one Family, whereof God is the common Parent, who has a like Regard for the Happiness of us all; we may rest assured, that the Comforts and Supports which we extend to our necessitous Brethren here, even a Cup of cold Water, the smallest Pittance, if proportion'd to our Abilities, will be kindly received and greatly rewarded hereafter. So that when we discharge this Duty as we ought, we distinguish ourselves as the Stewards and Almoners of Heaven, by dispensing the Blessings of God's Providence, and giving his Household their Meat in due Season. And at last, when this Mortal shall have put on Immortality; when we are all become one Nation, one Language, and one People, the Triumphs of our Humanity and Goodness will be proclaim'd on high, and attend us through all Eternity.

Which may God, &c.

On



ON SINCERITY.

PHILIPPIANS i. 10.

*Be sincere and without Offence till the Day
of Christ.*

BE sincere! a strange Command this must appear in an Age, wherein the very Name of Sincerity is made a Jest of; to beguile, to overreach, to adulate, to defame, are the reigning Accomplishments in these Days of Refinement; to have an open undesigning Mind is deem'd a Mark of Weakness and want of Knowledge of the World; and for the Tongue to be continually running counter to the Heart, is the grand Characteristick of Wisdom and Policy: Nay, so fashionable are the Vices of Fraud and Dissimulation become, that People perfectly form themselves upon the Neglect of every thing that is candid and honest; make it their very Boast that they excel in Artifice and Cunning, and prefer the poor Reputation of being crafty enough to compass an End, or carry a Point, to the Honour of despising such an End, when inconsistent with their Virtue and Integrity. I shall,
however,

however, endeavour in the following Discourse to plead the Cause of this distressed Virtue; to restore it to its just Rank and Esteem in the World; and to shew how much it is both our Duty and Interest to practise *Sincerity* in our Lives and Conversations.

Now by Sincerity in a moral Sense, is meant a hearty Intention of acting agreeable to the Rules of Justice and Truth. *To be sincere* is to be free from all Hypocrisy and Fraud, to have a Conscience void of Offence, and a Heart and Tongue always acting in Harmony and Confort; to lead a Life that is upright, undissembled and plain; and to be a Stranger to the mean Arts of Lying, Falshood and Disguise. 'Tis to adorn the several Relations of Life we are engaged in with Honour and Integrity, and to be determined and regulated both in our Words and Actions by the solid Principles of Virtue and Truth; but to examine this excellent Virtue a little more distinctly, we may consider it, In the first place, as it relates to Religion: And secondly, as it has a regard to Neighbourhood and Society. — If we view it in the former Light, then to denominate a Man *sincere in Religion*, there must be strict and serious Enquiry after Truth, and the Knowledge of our Duty, with a Mind free, and unprejudiced, anxious to be in the right, and ready to be convinced by any reasonable Proofs. We must not sit down satisfied with believing,

ing, as our Fathers did, nor take our Religion, like Estates, by Succession or Entail; but must look well into the Foundation on which we are to build, and be assur'd of the Reasonableness and Truth of our Profession; and when (after such a sincere and impartial Examination) our Minds are convinc'd, and we are fix'd in the Faith, we must next apply ourselves to the Observation of the Ordinances of our Religion, and be constant in the use of those Means which may assist us in the Practice of it. But last of all, that we may compleat the Work, and crown the Business of a sincere Piety, we must make the Practice of Virtue and Reformation of Life, the sole End of all our religious Offices and Worship. For it is practical Knowledge, and internal Goodness alone, which, the wise Man assures us, delivers from Death.

The truly sincere Man, therefore, contents not himself with the outward Profession of Religion, but takes care likewise to practise agreeably to what he professes. He thinks it not enough to be Orthodox in his Principles, *as he holds fast the Form of true Godliness*, so he never fails to display the Power of it. He is one that will not fashion his Faith to advance some private Interest, soothe some darling Humour, or please some particular Party, but he believes a thing, because 'tis true, and bravely stands to it, because he knows it to be true. He placeth not the whole

whole of Religion in Form, and Punctilio, or in little cheap Compliances, that cost him nothing: No, his Concern is about the *weightier Matters of the Law, Justice, Mercy, and Charity*. The *sincere Man in Religion*, effectually, makes good Job's Character of himself, *He puts on Righteousness, and it clothes him, His Judgment is as a Robe and a Diadem; He is Eyes to the Blind, and Feet is he to the Lame: He is a Father to the Poor, and the Cause, which he knoweth not, he searcheth out.*

These are some of the main Instances of *Sincerity*, with regard to our Creator.

In the next place, we may judge of our *Sincerity* with respect to our Fellow-Creatures, by enquiring how just and true we are in our Dealings and Intercourse with Men. How faithful to our Friends, and how generous and charitable to those who stand in need of our Assistance. To be *sincere*, we must never impose on the Ignorance of others; nor take any Advantage either of the Incapacity, or Necessity of those we have to deal with: We must be plain, open, and undisguis'd in all our Carriage and Behaviour; careful that what we act be agreeable to strict Justice, as that what we speak be agreeable to strict Truth. The Ends we propose to ourselves must be such as tend to the Good of the Community, as well as our own private Advantage, and the Means we use to accomplish those Ends, must be fair and regular, so that both our Heart
and

and Actions may be free from all Imposture and Disguise.

And tho' it is just and allowable for every Man to seek his own Advantage, and to better his Fortune in the World, yet the sincere Man will never attempt it by Practices of bad Exception, or by undermining and destroying his Neighbours; but *with the Wisdom of the Serpent*, will be sure always to join *the Innocency of the Dove*.

The sincere Man, in point of Flattery, will be most scrupulously cautious and continent: He will always behave with Candor, Sweetness, and Affability indeed; but then his fair Speeches are more than a Compliment, or Semblance of his Countenance; for what he once promises he is punctual in performing, tho' it be to his own Disadvantage.

In a word, he is a Man of Honour, Bravery, and Resolution. One that dares do, and say, whatever it fit, and just, in spite of any Discouragements; neither the Menaces of the Mighty, nor the Murmurings of the Multitude can frighten him from his Duty, for he dreads no Scourge, but that of his own Conscience, nor fears to do any thing but what is base or misbecoming. And so free is both his Heart and Actions from Imposture, that he cares not, if the whole World were privy to them all.

Whilst, on the contrary, so great is our present Degeneracy, that human Penalties are become

become the only Cement and Band of Society; every thing attempted that is but secure from Man's Tribunal; few things thought criminal that are not punish'd here; and a successful Fraud or Villany exalted even to a Virtue: all that noble Plainness and Simplicity of Soul, that generous Integrity of Nature, and that honest Disposition of Heart, which argues true Greatness of Mind, and Resolution of Spirit, and which was formerly the glorious Characteristick of a *Briton*, seems to be bartered for the abject Arts of lying Compliment and Craft. How shameful is it to observe in common Conversation the nauseous Flattery and Dissimulation, which is so universally made use of! How meanly Men pervert the very End of Speech, by talking a Language quite foreign from their Hearts, and using Expressions by which they either intend nothing at all, or which is worse, the very Reverse of what they would appear to do.

Nay this Species of Insincerity rises still higher at present, and under the specious Mask of applauding a Person, calumniates and reviles him. Men of Worth and Virtue seldom can pass unwounded; for it has always some poisoned Arrow to shoot at them, some invidious *But* or other, to cast a Blemish on all their good Qualities, and like the dead Fly in the Apothecary's Ointment, as *Solomon* tells us, gives the whole an offensive Savour. Such a one, says the insidious Hypocrite,

hypocrite, is a Man of fine Talents and great Learning 'tis true, *but* methinks he is a little too proud of it. — Such a one is brave and generous indeed, *but* I am sorry he is guilty of the Crimes that are whisper'd. — And this Man is very religious, and goes constantly to Church, *but* I am afraid he is no better than he should be at Heart. — Thus sullying the best of Characters with some foul Stain or other, and barbarously making Mens real Virtues the Occasion of loading them with imaginary Vices. And thus Friendship by the Hypocrite is made a Pander to Malice, and the Success of his Slander is owing to his Commendation. And yet as mean and pernicious as this Vice of Calumny in all its Shapes and Windings is; it is in high Credit and Vogue amongst us at present. 'Tis look'd on indeed as a necessary fashionable Accomplishment; and to excel in the Art of Defaming-well, is the very Plume of polite and high-bred Conversation. This is the important Business of most Companies and Conversations in the present refined Age. As soon as they have practis'd over their formal Fopperies and dissembled Civilities to one another, the Character of some absent Neighbour or other must be sacrificed to fill up the rest of their Discourse. Astonishing! that a Practice, which in itself is so base and dishonourable, and which, like the Murderer's Stab in the Dark, betrays the most cowardly as well as cruel Disposition,

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should wear the Stamp of Honour, and be the darling Employment of the Great and the Polite. But what is still more astonishing, is, that it should be so extravagantly indulged, and almost consecrated, I may say, by too many of that Sex, who are by Nature of the softer and more compassionate Make. That they who seem design'd to look Malice dead, and lay Discord bleeding at their Feet, to mollify the Fierceness and Asperity of Men, and propagate the Bands of Gentleness and Peace: That they, I say, should spread this *Pestilence that walketh in Darknes*; that they should force Nature to give way to the Destroyer Envy, and do such a Violence to their very Frame and Constitution as to make their Neighbour's Destruction their Pastime. We may justly therefore judge of such of them as are conversant in this Mischief, to be, like the Fruits of *Sodom*, however fair and amiable without, nothing but Deformity and Bitterness within. The two only Powers Men have to preserve either their Fortunes or Characters in this Life, are Innocence and Wisdom, and yet both of them together are not able to stand out against the Hypocrite's Slander. Let a Man's Condition be ever so flourishing and stately, he may be spoil'd of all by the Slanderer's Whisper, before he knows the Tongue that wounds him; or let his Fame be ever so fair and untainted, the foul Breath of Malice may blast it in a Moment.

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How inhuman, how unjust, and how scandalous therefore is this reigning Amusement, as it is tenderly stil'd? And how far from that Frankness and Simplicity of Soul that ought to adorn the Man of Honour and the Christian? Such a one will be more industrious to be good than to appear so; take more pains to prove himself a Friend, than to profess himself one; and when his Neighbour's Reputation comes in play, will be sure to lay hold of every Circumstance to extenuate a real Crime, or excuse a seeming one. His own Conscience is to him both his Witness and Judge, and informs him there is a Power that takes Cognisance of the Heart, who cannot be imposed on by Shew and Pretence, but measures all we do by the inviolable Standard of Truth and Justice.

We ought therefore to enquire into the chief Springs and Motives of our Actions, whether civil or religious, and see if the Glory of God, unbias'd Friendship and publick Good, or the Love of ourselves, and the Gratification of our own Passions are chiefly consulted by us.

And this we are the more concern'd to be acquainted with in the first place, because no Service can possibly recommend us to Heaven, if we are not sincere in our Performance of it; and however specious our outward Carriage and Behaviour may appear, it is unpro-

fitable and vain, if our Intentions and Designs are not perfectly good.

Were Heaven the Purchase of an apparent only and not real Piety, the most abandon'd and flagitious would not fail to make sure of it; but to profess Christ thus with our Lips, whilst we deny him in our Lives, is so far from being pleasing and acceptable to him, that 'tis only, like *Judas*, betraying him with a Kiss; and with an Air of Civility to mock and ridicule him.

Let us examine ourselves then strictly by this Test of Sincerity.

We frequent perhaps regularly the publick Assemblies of Worship, are constant in the Observation of every Ordinance, and punctual to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Church we adhere to: But are our Manners hereby regulated, and our Tempers reformed? Is the Corruption of our Nature subdued by these Means? And our Appetites and Passions made subject to our Reason? Do we by these Aids aspire after Virtue with a warmer Vigour? And are Justice, Charity, and Benevolence increased in our Breasts? Otherwise we have been only dwelling in the Porch of Religion, and all this gaudy Dress of Devotion will profit us nothing.

To prevent therefore this Danger, let us carefully make use of the Means of Grace, not for Form and Ostentation, or to carry on any secular Designs and Interests, but to confirm our Minds in the sincere and undissembled

bled Practice of Virtue; not to judge of our Acceptance with God, from our Compliance only with external Worship, but from the Intention of our Hearts and the Amendment of our Lives; not to think we are good from our Attendance only on the Ordinances of Religion, but to judge of the Value of those Performances from the Influence they have on our Manners, and the Conduct of our Lives: For unless Sincerity of Intention accompany our Sacrifice, and we have the Incense of an upright Heart to season the Devotions we offer, we may call, like the Priests of *Baal*, upon our God till Noon without any Return or Sign of being heard. — *Sincerity* being then such a necessary Ingredient in the Offices of a Christian, and the Practice of it being so absolutely requisite to recommend us to Heaven, let us in the next place consider the proper Means of obtaining this Virtue, and enquire how we may become sincere, true, and acceptable Christians.

Now one excellent Means of curing us of Dissimulation, and making us sincere in all our Intentions, is a stedfast Belief in the Omniscience of God, and that 'tis impossible for us by any Arts or Disguises to deceive him.

Let us then under all the Temptations of Life, when Pride or Ambition, when Malice, Envy and Covetousness, or any other customary and favourite Sin entice us from our Duty, seriously consider and be assur'd, that tho' we

here may gloss over evil Actions with popular Excuses, and pass for good Men in the midst of much Guilt, tho' Offence's fair Face may in this World skreen a foul Heart, and the Fig-leaf Veil of Hypocrisy conceal from Men our Impurity, yet the Day will come, when our Behaviour will be set in a true Light, and all our Imperfections and Insincerity expos'd in the Sight of Men and Angels.

Another material Inducement to *Sincerity*, is the Consideration how odious the opposite Character is, and how hateful Fraud and Diffimulation are both to God and good Men. Our *Saviour* describes to us very emphatically the Punishment of the wicked Servant, by telling us, *that he should have his Portion allotted him with the Hypocrite*; which is made the Standard of the very worst that can befall us hereafter, to let us see the Deformity of the Crime by the measure of its Punishment. Insincerity and Diffimulation are the most mean and odious of all Vices, and render us most contemptible even in the Esteem of the World: It betrays a Poorness of Spirit, that must have recourse to such a Covering, a Meanness of Soul that is ashamed of its own Intentions, and a Cowardise of Heart that is afraid to speak the Truth; it is inconsistent with Honour, for it has Trick and Artifice for its Parents; repugnant to Good-nature, for it is injurious in its Aims; and contrary to good Manners, for Deceit is its Business. It is therefore inconsistent

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ent with the Gentleman, the Friend, or the Companion, destructive of all Commerce and Intercourse with Men, and the Bane of Society, Amity, and Peace: Besides as it is cowardly, base, and dishonourable, so it is likewise both troublesome and unprofitable. There is not half the Pains requir'd to be really virtuous, as there is to appear so: It is very difficult to personate a Character which we do not feel within us; extremely unnatural to be continually acting a Lye; and to keep both the Body and Mind upon the Rack of Dissimulation. There is likewise a certain Apprehension and Terror, which continually accompanies the Consciousness of Guilt, and which arises from the Dread of being discover'd and expos'd. The Dissembler can never be easy and secure, but, like a Malefactor in Disguise, fears he is seen thro', and known by every one, nay, is continually apt to discover himself.

Nature will sometimes peep thro' the Veil; and 'tis almost impossible to keep so nice a Guard, but that the Mind will be often flying in the Face, and the Heart and Tongue unseasonably correspond: And if once a Man happens to betray himself, or be found out, all his Labour and Designs are frustrated and lost; neither Falshood nor Truth can serve him for the future, but every thing he says or does will be suspected.

What Labyrinths and Perplexities is the Man of Stratagem and Intrigue perpetually
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hamper'd with? What various Emotions and Tempests of Mind? At every Ebb or Flow of Things without, there is a Tide within of swelling or sinking Affections, every Change abroad making a Change of Thoughts and Designs at home; cross Accidents having cross Passions, and he is as much a Universe of various thwarting Affections, as the World is of Motions: He has a thousand clashing Interests to distract his Deliberations, a thousand several Windings to puzzle him in his Pursuits: He is frighten'd with every Blast, starts at every Check in Motion, and is equally solicitous how to deceive, and how to conceal the Deceit. Whilst to the sincere and upright Man, all is calm and shine within, the State of Heaven itself: *His Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, and all his Paths are Peace. His Righteousness is made as clear as the Light, and his just Dealing as the Noon-day.*

And now, when we consider how great and graceful a thing it is to act with unshaken Sincerity and Honour; thus to throw off the Malice and Impertinence of the World, and defy their most rigid Censure of our Conduct: This single Consideration, I say, is sufficient, one would think, to prevail on us to the Practice of it, if we would indulge the Sensuality of an undisturb'd, untainted Mind, the Luxury of having a Conscience void of Offence, and a Breast void of Apprehensions and Terrors.

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For so shall we procure the Favour of Heaven, and purchase the Approbation of the World; so shall we be an Ornament to the Religion we profess, and instead of receiving the Recompense of Hypocrisy hereafter, shall have the Fruition of those Joys which are reserv'd for the Upright in the Day of Christ: Which last great Consideration to engage us to be sincere, is intimated by the Apostle both here in the Text; and several other parallel Passages.

Since, therefore, there will come a Day in which the Secrets of all Hearts will be reveal'd, and *that which is spoken in Closets will be proclaim'd on the House-tops*; when the Paint of Hypocrisy will be stript off, and every thing appear in its proper Colour and Quality; we ought diligently to turn our Eyes inward on our Hearts, and be cautious, lest Hypocrisy or Fraud pitch their Tents there. Insincerity even in this World, tho' it has too many Friends to keep it in Countenance, makes but a very odd Figure when discover'd; and even they, who gain the most by it, have seldom Hardiness enough to defend it. How foul then must all Knavery and Prevarication appear at that dreadful Bar, where the righteous God judgeth the Earth? where Wickedness will have no Pretences to shroud or palliate it, but appear in its own native Deformity with all its Meanness, Folly, and Ingratitude about it; then the Cries of the Oppress'd, which Craft and Dissimulation

tion till that Time had stified: Then the Groans of all those injur'd Persons, whose Fortune and Fame had been destroy'd by Calumny and Slander, shall rise up in Judgment against the Underminer and the Hypocrite: Then there will be a visible and everlasting Distinction made between the Man of Sincerity and the Dissembler: The one shall contemn Heaven's Power no longer, nor the other wait upon its Promises in vain. Then all such who chose to appear good rather than be good, who value the Noise of popular Applause more than the silent Whispers of an untainted Conscience, will see the Folly of their Choice too late, and have their Portion allotted 'em with those Spirits *who lie in wait to deceive*. But the Sincere and Upright shall then *shine like the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father*: Their Labours and their Fears will end, their Faith have no farther Trial, and their Hopes expire in the Fruition of those celestial Joys which are laid up for those whom the King of Glory delights to honour.



ON VAIN-GLORY.

GALAT, v. 26.

Let us not be desirous of Vain-Glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

THE Love of Vain-Glory, or the Desire of being admired and applauded by others, is a Vice very common in the World, though very little taken notice of. It springs from that Excess of Self-Love in the Mind, which creates in us an over-weening Opinion of our own Merit and Excellencies, and makes us look on ourselves as deserving Praise and Admiration. This Passion presides not only in Men of Parts, Fortune and Eminence, but in those likewise of the lowest and obscurest Station : There being few but fancy themselves to possess some Excellency for which they deserve to be valu'd and esteem'd, and look on the Pursuit of this airy Tribute, as the Demand only of a just Debt that is due to them.

But as we are not to judge of Faults as Self-Flattery represents them to us, but by their mischievous Effects, and Contrariety to the

the Laws that God hath assign'd us. If these be enquir'd into we shall find Vain-Glory to be as pernicious a Crime as it is a common one, and that the last two Vices mention'd in the Text, Contention and Envy, are the natural Offspring of Vain-Glory; for when once this selfish Affection has got head in us, it immediately destroys the Candor and Ingenuity of our Natures: Nothing but private Interests and Aims are consulted by us, and every generous View and social Motive neglected and laid down; our natural and publick Affections are of course silenc'd and depress'd, and our Breasts are fill'd with those sordid Passions of Contention and Envy, which make us miserable in Ourselves and a Pest to our Fellow-Creatures.

To the Discouragement therefore of these selfish Passions, as forbidden us in the Text, let us in order examine the Folly and mischievous Effects of them.

First, with regard to Vanity.

Now People that are desirous and fond of Vain-Glory, set their Affections on a Thing which it is ten to one but they miss of. The very Means they make use of destroy the End; and the more Pains a Man takes to be courted and admired, he is generally the more neglected and contemn'd: For a Man in pursuit of this Shadow is necessarily exposed to a great many Follies and Indecencies, which render him contemptible in the Eyes of the World.

World. And then how must a Wretch be mortified, when he finds he has made himself the Jest, instead of the Idol, of Mankind, and that after so much dirty Work to make himself shine, he has only blotted out what little Lustre he might have laid Claim to before. But suppose a Man by much Care and Assiduity should attain some Measure of this airy Opulence, yet 'tis very difficult to secure the Possession of it: Glory and Applause are always on the Wing, and we are continually in danger of losing in an Hour what has been the Labour of Years. The same Breath of Man's Mouth, that raised the Bubble, may blast it in a Moment. What more uncertain than the Opinion of the Multitude? or more common than for publick Applause and Commendation being changed at once into a general Defamation? He who is the Darling of the Million one Day, may the next be the Object of their Hatred. Some little Misbehaviour or false Step in his Conduct, nay a bare Whisper industriously convey'd from one to another, may put a Stop to him in his Pursuit of this visionary Glory, and rob him of all his painful Acquirement. This too is generally the Case of the Vain-Glorious; for the rest of the World are continually on the Watch to curb them in their ambitious and haughty Pretensions.

But to combat this Vice a little more successfully, let us examine its general and more plausible

plausible Pretensions, and see if there is any thing in them which can excuse or palliate it.

And these I take to be,

First, Learning.

Secondly, Nobility.

Thirdly, Power.

These being accounted the brightest and most distinguishing Advantages in Life. To begin then with Learning.

Now this and Vain-Glory agree very ill together. For a Man of Letters may have a clear Notion of the Absurdity of this Vice, and being better acquainted with the Frame and Passions of human Nature, he cannot but discover how disagreeable it must make him.

In the next place Learning gives us a fuller Conviction of the Imperfection of our Nature, which one would be apt to think should incline us to Modesty.

The more a Man knows the more he discovers his Ignorance. He cannot revolve any Part of the Creation in his Mind, but he finds himself encompass'd with Doubts and Difficulties. He knows he has a Being, 'tis true; and so does an Idiot: But what this Thing is which he calls himself, 'tis hard to say. He has reason to believe that he is compounded of two very different Ingredients, Spirit and Matter; but how such unallied and disproportioned Substances should hold any Correspondence and act upon one another, no Man's Learning could ever yet tell him. And as
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the more refined Understandings know little or nothing of themselves or the material World, they are as defective in their Skill about moral Truths too (excepting those who are taught by Revelation, and this the Unlearned are as capable of as they). We see that the Rules of Decency, Government, and even of Justice itself, which are establish'd in Countries by the wisest and most learned, are yet so different in one Place from what they are in another, that one would be apt to think Right and Wrong lay rather in the Fancies of Men, than in the Reason of Things, and was bounded more by Seas and Rivers, than by any unalterable Limits of Nature: That Virtue and Vice were minted by the Civil Magistrate, and like Coins would pass current only in his own Dominions.

Now surely one would imagine, that the more intimate Acquaintance we had with the Imperfections of our Nature, the more Reason we should have to be humble and not vain. Is Weakness a proper Foundation to create our lofty Conceits upon? For a Man to be proud who can demonstrate his own Poverty, is the highest Degree of Folly. A Man of Learning therefore of all others has the least Excuse for being vain-glorious. Come, Nobility, then in the next place, and let us see whether that and Vanity make a better Figure together.

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Now if we look back into the Original of all Nobility, no one will have Occasion to boast much or be proud of its Rise.

But to consider it as it stands at present, whether hereditary or acquired, whether transmitted to us by our Ancestors, or bestowed on us by our Prince.

Hereditary Nobility has surely nothing for a Man to be vain of, because 'tis borrowed: Those great Actions which we had no Share in cannot be any Part of our Commendation. 'Tis true, they ought to gain us some Respect, and should be taken notice of by others, as an Encouragement to Virtue; but then he that depends wholly upon the Worth of his Predecessors, ought to consider that he has but the Honour of an Image, and is worship'd not for his own sake, but upon the account of what he represents: And surely That Man has very little Reason to be vain, who is forced to patch up his Figure with the Relicks of the Dead, and rise Tomb-Stones and Monuments for Reputation. Indeed if a Man could bequeath his Virtues by Will, and settle Sense, Honour and Religion upon his Children as certainly as Lands and Titles descend to them, a brave Ancestor would be something to be vain of. But if a Man is not furnish'd with noble Qualities as well as deck'd out with Titles and Escutcheons, the Lustre of his Family serves only to point out his own Degeneracy, and make him the more remarkably contemptible.

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In the next place, as to acquired Nobility. I can see no more Excuse for a Man's being vain upon that Score than on the former: For suppose a Man has really done Service to his Country, and is remarkable for great Abilities and a generous Use of them, (not that this is always the Case, by the by, of those whom Nobility is conferr'd on :) But suppose it were, when he has received so valuable a Consideration and Reward for his Services as Honour and Estate, he ought to acquiesce, and not be too assuming, and require too much Submission. He has no Right to set a Tax upon Conversation, and put People under Contribution for Respect. By this Behaviour he only exposes his less noble Ancestors, and casts a Reproach on his own former Condition.

The last Pretension I mentioned for Vain-Glory was Power or Authority.

Now that Men in Magistracy and Power ought to assert their Office, and not make themselves cheap by improper Familiarities, is highly reasonable and decorous. But still their Character may be overstrain'd. To prevent which Inconvenience they may be pleased to remember, that their Power was given them more for the Benefit of others than themselves, and therefore they should show their Authority upon nothing but Insolence and Injustice. In a word, there are only three Things that a Man has any Reason to be vain of, good Nature, good Manners, and a good
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Conscience; and these are the very Things that will not suffer him to be vain at all.

From this Examination, I think, it appears upon the whole the best Way to procure Respect and Observance, is, not to insist too violently on it. Haughtiness and Vanity are most unfortunate Qualities.

Nay, the very Indulgence of this Passion proves a Man to be entirely undeserving of the Object of it. True Merit is never attended with Pride and Superciliousness. To bestow Compliments upon ourselves and degrade others, looks as if a Man was conscious of his own Insignificance, and had nothing but Out-Side and Ill-Nature to make him considerable. He that is truly noble and praise-worthy is humble and modest in himself, and easy and agreeable to every one else. Such a one is sensible that true Greatness does not consist in Pomp, Pageantry, or Posts of Honour, but in making wise Determinations upon every Occasion that offers, and adhering unalterably to them when he has done: In defending injured Right, or neglected Truth and Merit, whatever Disadvantage they lie under: In behaving with an equal Mind both in Prosperity and Adversity, so that the one should never make him haughty and imperious, nor the other sink him into Meanness and Dejection. But if ever he shews more Spirit than ordinary, it is when he is ill used, and the World frowns upon him. In a word, he is equally removed from the
Extremes

Extremes of Servility and Vanity, and scorns either to trample on a Worm, or sneak to an Emperor.

Though he be not out of his own Favour, yet he never sets too high a Value on his Worth, but takes pleasure rather in giving Honour than receiving it, not in a Fashion of complimentary Courtesy, but in the sincere Simplicity of his Judgment. He emulates no Man in any thing but Goodness, and that with more Desire, than Boasts, of overtaking. Such a one's Greatness and Merit sit so easy upon him, that no one has Reason to wish they were less: Whilst the vain Man is all Flash and Froth; takes infinite Pains to be majestically ridiculous, and to become the Fool's Wonder, and the wise Man's Fool.

Besides, as the Thirst of Vain-Glory is fruitless and disquieting to ourselves, so it is often the Cause of giving Disturbance to others, and produces the *second Vice* mentioned by the Apostle, of *provoking one another*.

Strife and Vain-Glory generally accompany each other. For when we calculate by false Measures, and overrate our own Condition; when we stamp a superior Value and Significance on ourselves, and set up the Golden Image to be worshipp'd by the World, why then truly if there be any one bold enough to stand in our Way, who refuses to answer all our extravagant Expectations, and will not

immediately fall down and do Homage to the Idol, we look on it as a very great Injury to our Worth, and, like *Nebuchadnezzar*, are for casting all Opposers into the fiery Furnace.

But Strife and Contention are not the only bad Fruits which spring from the Root of Vain-Glory, for it likewise produces in the Breast that Bane of all Religion and Virtue, that infernal Passion, call'd Envy.

Now Envy is a Displeasure arising in a Man for some supposed Excellency or Advantage in other of his Fellow-Creatures. I say of his Fellow-Creatures; because this Passion is entirely confin'd to those of the same Species, and lies between Beings that are equal in Nature, though unequal in Circumstances. We never envy Brutes, for Instance, though they exceed us in several Respects; because their Advantages are foreign to our Nature and Situation, and therefore are neither expected nor desired by us. Neither, on the other hand, are we apt to repine at the higher Condition of an Angel; because there is so great a Disadvantage in our Nature and Composition, that our Capacities are not suited to enjoy their Happiness and Perfections. But where our Beings and essential Properties are alike, there our Pretensions are apt to rise, and Envy to exert itself. For why? cries the envious Man: Am not I of the same Nature and Kind with the rest? Am not I cast in the
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same Mould, made up of the same Matter, and stamp'd with the same Impression? Why then should not I pass equally in general Esteem? But let this Man consider, that tho' his Original be the same, yet he may be very much inferior both in Talents and Acquirements to those he compares himself with, which makes a very considerable Difference in the Value. If others purchase Honour at a greater Expence of Merit than ourselves, why should we grudge them the Possession of it? If the Advantage was fairly gain'd, 'tis the highest Injustice to complain, or envy the Reward of it. But you will say, perhaps, that the Case is quite otherwise; that all the Merit is on your Side, and the Success only on the other. That you are disappointed of your Expectations, though they are moderate and just, whilst others are prosperous, not only beyond their Desert but even the Vanity of their Wishes. Suppose it should be so, of what Benefit can Envy and Discontent be to us? Why should we grow peevish because Success does not always accompany Desert; or indulge a Passion, which will extinguish all our Worth merely because it is not sufficiently taken notice of? We ought not surely to think ourselves injured, because another is happy, or to look on ourselves as defrauded or robb'd by our Neighbour, because he enjoys what we wish for.

And as Envy is an unreasonable, it is likewise an ill-natur'd Vice.

It wishes the Force of Goodness restrain'd, and the Measures of Happiness abated. It laments over Prosperity and sickens at the Sight of Health. The envious Man is in pain at every thing that ought to give him Pleasure; all the Perfections and Prosperity of his Fellow-Creatures are odious to him. He censures the Liberality of Providence, and is angry at the Goodness of God.

Besides, as the envious Man is ill-natur'd to others, he is still more so to himself. Envy is the most ungratifying and disconsolate Appetite of any in the Breast. There is Power for Ambition, Pleasure for Luxury, and Pelf even for Covetousness; but Envy can give nothing except Restlessness and Vexation. Envy is compounded of Impotence and Malice; and surely the Thirst of Revenge without the Power of satisfying it, is the severest Torture Revenge itself could invent. The envious Person magnifies the Happiness of his Neighbour, only to increase his own Misery; and though he hath always the good Things of others before him, to fret and afflict himself, he can never look on his own to take any Profit or Pleasure in them. He is not only disturb'd by common Calamities, but likewise by common Blessings; for as his Nature gives him a Share in one, so doth his Ill-Nature in the other. And he that hath his
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own Troubles and the Happiness of his Neighbour to disturb him, need not be wish'd any greater Punishment. And as Envy disorders the Mind, it also injures the Body: *A sound Heart, saith Solomon, is the Life of the Flesh, but Envy is the Rotteneſs of the Bones.* It is a Disease in its very Constitution, and every Pulse is a Pain.

Again, as Charity covers a Multitude of Sins, so Envy obscures a Multitude of Virtues. Like a blasting Mildew it kills every good Fruit in the Breast that indulges it, and turns the Blessing of superior Talents into a Curse. Men of bright Parts under the Direction of this Demon, like *Sampson's* Foxes with Firebrands at their Tail, are shining Plagues both to Themselves and their Fellow-Creatures.

These are the unhappy Consequences of an envious Disposition, which, if duly attended to, were sufficient, one would think, to disengage us from it.

Let us all therefore take the Apostle's Advice, and put away Envy. Let us willingly and joyfully behold any Good or Excellency in our Neighbour, and let us willingly acknowledge it, and give the Practice of it to them, as to the right Owners. Let not their superior Happiness and Prosperity provoke us to hate them, but let it rather provoke us to imitate them. If we come short of them in Parts, let us endeavour to make it up by Diligence

ligence ; and if they excel us in Virtue, let us labour the more earnestly *to grow in Grace*. Let us examine our own Talents and exert our Genius, and strive by Industry and Humility to secure our own Fortune and Reputation ; and then we shall not be envious of others. Those who are good for any thing themselves will be contented that others should be so too.

And above all, let us purge our Breasts from the vicious Desire of Vain-Glory, which is the Source and Parent of this pernicious Evil. He that does not let his Satisfaction depend on common Fame, and popular Applause will not be discomposed by every little Omission, nor envy his Neighbour's superior Reputation.

But last of all, the Expectation of a future Immortality, when every Man's Reward shall be proportion'd to his Merit, will be the best Antidote to these Distempers. This Way all the seeming Partialities of Fortune will be set aside, and every one has a fair Turn to be as great and as happy as he pleases. Thus Station and Enjoyment lies in every one's Power ; since Men will not be valued for their Abilities, but for their Integrity ; not consider'd for the Height of their Character, but for the Beauty of their Behaviour. When this Scene of Life is shut up, the Slave will be equal to his Master, and
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the Peasant to his Prince; nay, above them too, if they have acted better. And now, nothing but a Meekness and Sweetness of Temper can ever make us fit for those peaceful Regions, where good Understanding, Harmony of Inclinations, and mutual Endearments are the eternal Blessings and Ornaments of the divine Society: Where Vain-Glory, Contention and Envy are never heard of, and where our greatest Business and Pleasure shall be to love one another, even as God our Father hath loved us,

To whom, &c.



ON



ON CONTENTMENT.

PHILLIPPIANS iv. 6.

Be careful for nothing.

IT has been ever the Study of all Mankind how to attain Satisfaction of Spirit and Contentment of Mind, as the most desirable Good they could possibly arrive to. There is no other End of all their Thoughts and restless Contrivances, of all their Labours and busy Endeavours, but this only, that they may be easy at the last; and yet so far do the perverse Appetites of Men overbalance their Reason and Judgment, that instead of taking the right Method of coming at this Blessing, they generally act in direct Opposition to it; instead of *taking no Thought for the Morrow, or being careful for nothing*, the only Means of attaining to this wish'd-for Tranquillity, they learn, contrary to the Apostle, *in whatsoever State they are, therewith never to be content*.

In order therefore to rectify this pernicious Mistake, I shall make it the business of the following Discourse to shew the Unreasonableness and Folly of such an anxious Disposition;

tion; and the Obligations we lie under to be content with such Things as we have.

Now to be perfectly above Solitude, or to be wholly unconcern'd about the future, is not the Privilege of created Beings. Nothing short of an almighty Power which can command all Conveniencies and secure all Events, is naturally able to procure an absolute Tranquillity. All rational Beings, who are subject to a superior Power, who find themselves expos'd to Chance and Disappointment, and are cloath'd with Wants and Desires, must, if not perfectly stupid, have their Cares and Attentions in Life. We are by no means to resign ourselves to Carelessness and Sloth; Providence expects we should supply our Necessities by the Method of Prudence and Diligence, and the Scripture in many Places both approves of and commands a moderate and regular Industry. The Apostle's Design therefore in the Text is not to dissuade from a just and laudable Endeavour to mend our Condition in the World, and to furnish ourselves with the Comforts as well as Conveniencies of Life, neither is it to advise us to throw all upon Providence, and to be at no pains ourselves for our own Support and Happiness, it being highly unreasonable to expect Heaven will provide for us in a miraculous Manner: But his Intention is to persuade us from being over-solicitous about the future, and from troubling ourselves because Things do not always
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go just as we would have them: 'Tis to advise those who are but slenderly supply'd, not to be dissatisfy'd because their Portion is not larger, and those whose Portion is larger, not to be disquieted at every little Disaster, but to enjoy the Blessings they possess with Satisfaction and Contentment: The Reasonableness of which Counsel will be evident from the following Considerations.

First, That Anxiety and Discontent will not mend our Affairs, but rather tend to make them worse.

When we have put our Concerns in the best Posture we can, and set them in the most promising way for Success, when we have made use of every proper Opportunity, and pursu'd every honest and honourable Advantage, we have nothing more to do but to rely upon Providence, and rest satisfied with the Event, considering it, whatever it be, as the good Pleasure of God. If indeed we could advantage our Condition by our Disquiet; if we could remove any Difficulties, or lessen any Misfortunes, then, as *Jonah* says, *we might do well to be angry*: But alas, all the Eagerness of our Humour, or Strength of our Wishes, signify nothing towards altering the Course of Nature, or making it in the least compliant with our Inclinations. The Husbandman may repine at the Unseasonableness of a Season, but all his Impatience can neither influence the Air nor *stop the Bottles of Heaven*. The Mariner may torment

torment himself, because the Winds and the Seas will not obey him ; but were he to raise as great a Tempest within him as he's displeas'd at without, he would come never the sooner to his wish'd-for Haven. Since things, therefore, are too cross and inexorable to regard our Complaints, and be moulded to our Fancies ; 'tis more prudent, when we have done our duty in our Endeavours after Success, to let the World have its Course, and be easy in our Condition, than vainly to perplex ourselves about that which is not in our Power to prevent. And what if we should find our Expectations unanswer'd, and our Industry unrewarded ; that we are disappointed of our Hopes, tho' they are but moderate and fair, whilst others are prosperous, not only beyond their Merit, but even the Vanity of their Expectations ; suppose, I say, it should happen so ; what Benefit will Mutiny and Discontent be of to us ? Misfortunes bring necessary Inconveniencies along with them, which the wisest Conduct cannot avoid ; and 'tis therefore the utmost Imprudence to add Weight to the Grievance ; *sufficient for the Day is the Evil thereof*. But it may be said that 'tis impossible to be content with Poverty and Indigence, or not to be troubled at an irreparable or unconquerable Evil, for when these are past our Power to remove, they become fatal to us, and haunt us wherever we go. This must be confess'd to be but a melancholy Prospect, but still

still nothing we meet with here, can be so intolerable but that it may be born with Patience, and alleviated by Custom and Degrees. Impatience and Discontent will only inflame the Malignity, and add Stings to the Affliction. Some People who pretend to like their present Condition well enough, are still anxious and uneasy for fear it should not last; and suppose these Apprehensions were as just as they are generally groundless, will not the Calamity be with us soon enough, unless we go forth to meet it? Why should we torment ourselves before our Time, or make our Unhappiness longer than God and Nature design'd it? To foresee an Evil indeed in order to prevent it, or to prepare our Minds to bear it with the greater Fortitude, is prudent and commendable; but to use our Consideration only to fret and disturb our Minds, is such a Reproach to our Understandings, that it makes our Misfortunes uncreditable, and adds Shame to our Afflictions.

Secondly, Another Consideration to deter us from being anxious and discontented, is, that by indulging this Humour, we shall do certain Prejudice to our Dispositions, which will make our Lives uneasy both to ourselves and others.

When Men are always disquieted with their present Condition; when their Minds are continually fretted with Fears and Disappointments; they are ever apt to grow churlish and
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fall out with the World. *They say in their Haste that all Men are Liars, and all the Children of Men deceitful on the Weights.* It makes Men grow selfish, suspicious, and unconvertible; they are not so generous in their Actions, nor so decent in their Censures. Wherever this Humour takes place, that Sweetness and Evenness of Temper, that prudent Reservedness, that graceful and dispassionate way of Converse which are the Characteristicks of a true Friend and a good Christian, are upon the least ill Success, or Change of Affairs, thrown off at once; they sympathise with their Condition, grow worse as fast as their Fortune, and there is as great an Alteration within them as without. And as Discontent, when indulg'd, is apt to spoil and impair Mens Dispositions, so likewise the very Indulgence of it, argues a weak and unfortify'd Mind. Anxiety is a conscious Emptiness, an unsatisfy'd Capacity; for the Mind to be clamorous and importunate after foreign Objects, implies a very great Want and Poverty at home. A wise Man will be satisfy'd with what he enjoys, and if he cannot easily enlarge his Possessions, he can retrench his Desires: He will keep his Inclinations within the Compass of his Power, and wish himself always what he is. There is Greatness, Freedom, and Pleasure in such Management as this. But for a Man to overlook always what he has, and to languish for the Enjoyment of what is out of his Way, is sickly and

and servile. Thoughtfulness and Discontent, when settled in the Habit, betray a Poorness of Spirit, and shew a Man's Mind to be entirely under the Government of his Appetites, and Command of his Fortune. To say we *must* have such a Thing, is to say we are Slaves, and argues us conscious of our own Weakness.

Thirdly, Another Consideration to induce us to be satisfy'd with what we have, is that Anxiety and Discontent lead to the use of ill Means, and put us upon redressing our imagin'd Grievances by unwarrantable Courses.

An uneasy craving Mind is willing to purchase Relief almost upon any Terms. A Man that thinks his Burden lies heavy upon him, usually takes the first Opportunity to throw it off: He is too much perplex'd to stand rigorously upon Justice, or to attend to the Distinctions of Good and Evil. Since Virtue has prov'd so unprofitable a Quality, the anxious Man will think it time to get rid of it as he can. His Understanding likewise suffers as well as his Conscience; it makes him transgress not only the Laws of Justice and Virtue, but of common Prudence likewise: The Imagination is often disorder'd by Discontent to that Degree, that 'tis ready to hearken to any violent Counsels, and to engage in precipitant Practices, by which Means People are plung'd into greater Evils than those they seek to avoid.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, This Temper moreover implies a Complaint against Providence.

Why are we displeas'd with our present Condition, or very anxious about what is to come, but because we either look on God as unconcern'd in the Government of the World, or else that he does not act wisely and equitably in it: 'Tis to charge God foolishly and complain of the Justice and Administration of his Government: *Though we rise up early, say they, and late take Rest*; though we pursue our Designs by none but just and honourable Means, and *in the Sweat of our Brows* eat the Bread of Carefulness; yet our Honesty is discourag'd, and our Diligence thrown away; Providence takes no Notice of us, nor ever vouchsafes to interpose in our Behalf; our Creator, sure, *has forgotten to be gracious*, and *the Judge of the World has ceas'd to do right*: Have we not Reason then to begin to take care of ourselves, and to be concern'd for the Welfare and Security of our Condition? This is the Language of Discontent; this is the Meaning of an anxious Mind: It makes Men so unreasonable as to complain against the wise Designs of Providence, and to quarrel with the establish'd Laws of Nature; whereas did we consider as we ought, we should perceive that God has been more liberal to the least of us than we could pretend to, and that Heaven is very far from being in our Debt. Do we imagine that God has abandon'd the Government of

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his Creation, and committed all Things to Chance? If so, then indeed we may have some Colour for our Complaints; but our complaining will be to no Purpose, since the same Chance alone which has run counter to us, can bring us Relief. But if on the contrary we are satisfy'd (as we have all Reason to be) that the same Almighty Power which form'd the World, now rules and presides over it, there's not the least Shadow of Pretence for our Murmuring. As he is infinitely wise he cannot but know what is best for us, and as he is infinitely good he must needs bestow that which his Wisdom sees to be best: As he's all-knowing he can discern the Times and Seasons, when such or such Things would be proper for us, and as he is Almighty he can bestow them on us whenever they are proper.

'Tis more prudent, therefore, as well as more pious, to resign up our Wills to Providence, and acquiesce in his Disposal: For should God yield to the Importunity of our Complaints, his Favours would often prove our undoing, as the heathen Poet of old satirically observ'd, that the Gods had ruin'd whole Families by granting them their Requests. And therefore *Socrates* teaches us a very discreet Prayer: *That God would give us those Things that were convenient, though we did not ask them, and refuse us those that were not, though we earnestly begg'd for them.* God takes a Pro-
spect

spect of universal Nature at once, and views the utmost Limits of Futurity; he foresees what Miseries we should be plung'd into, what Rock we should run upon if allow'd to steer our own Point, and therefore in Mercy restrains our Course, denies our fatal Wishes, and makes us happy against our Wills. And now, is not an All-comprehending Wisdom the safest Director of our Affairs? Can we have a better Protection than Omnipotence? And is it possible for any thing to be kinder to us than that Goodness which is infinite? How unreasonable therefore, how unjust, how ungrateful must it be, to murmur at his Disposal of us, and to complain as if our Merit and Interest were neglected by him?

Having thus taken notice of the Unreasonableness and some of the unhappy Consequences of immoderate Care and Anxiety, we come in the second Place to consider what Reasons we have to avoid this Vice, and the Obligations we lie under to be *content with what we have*, as the same Apostle adviseth us, *Heb. xiii. 5.*

First, Now one great Reason against an Over-Carefulness, is (what Experience as well as Scripture teaches us) that our Life consisteth not in the Abundance of Things we possess. If Ease and Security were the natural Effects of Wealth; if to be rich and to be happy were the same thing; then it were not to be wonder'd at, if Men were warm in their Pursuit

of it: But if it neither frees Men from those Passions of the Mind, nor those other many Calamities which imbitter Life to the inferior Part of Mankind, why then should we be so solicitous after it? Let us observe then a little; does not Envy and Ambition, does not Hatred and Anger, reign more frequently and insolently in the Bosom of the Wealthy than of the labouring Cottager? neither are they more exempt from the Diseases of the Body, than from the Passions of the Mind. Much Sloth and much Excess, as they are the Privileges of a gay Fortune, so are often the Sources of innumerable Diseases, which shorten and torment human Life: Whereas moderate Labour and a regular Temperance will prolong Life, with Ease and Health, to the utmost Period of Nature. Contentment is more rarely found in a splendid Fortune than in a humble one. Those Gaieties and Pleasures which we so much desire are attended with a proportionable Number of Inconveniencies; and more Cares, Fears, and Dangers wait upon the Scepter than upon the Spade. If all this be true, (as most certainly it is) if Abundance neither makes Men more wise nor more healthy, more happy in themselves, nor more contented with their Condition, to what End should we be so anxious and solicitous after it. Not that I would here insinuate that Wealth, if well us'd, is either any Disadvantage or Misfortune to its Possessors; on the contrary it is

a very excellent and singular Blessing. Riches bring along with them the *Power* of doing Good, which those who want them can only enjoy in *Intention*; a Treasure certainly of no small Consideration, forasmuch as the actual Exercise of Humanity must afford the utmost Satisfaction a human Creature is capable of. All my Design, therefore, was to shew that Riches are not so necessary to our Happiness as to make us over-solicitous for them, or not contented without them; that be it any worldly Good which we want or any such Evil which we endure; the former are not of such Moment, but we may be happy without them, nor the other so afflictive but we may be patient at least under them.

Secondly, The next Encouragement to persuade us to be content with our Condition is, that cross Circumstances are so far from being always Evils, that they are often of the greatest Service and Advantage to us.—They make the truest Representation to us of the Value of all Things here below, and discover how vain, how inconstant, and how frail they are; and how insufficient to give us that true Quiet and Repose which we so much seek and labour for. There is nothing more apt to make our Souls of a truly noble and generous Temper, than this Exercise under Misfortunes: They breed and train up those who will be taught by them to an excellent and God-like Virtue; they teach us Fortitude, Patience, Meekness, G 3 Courage.

Courage. Here Occasions are presented to us to win the most glorious Victories, and to triumph over the most daring Enemies. The most illustrious Examples who have carried human Nature to the highest Pitch have ow'd the bravest Part of their Character to the Troubles they met with. Our Saviour himself is said by the Apostle *to have been made perfect thro' Sufferings*. This made St. Paul glory in Tribulations; and St. James exhorts his Converts *to count it all Joy when they fell into divers Temptations*; and for this Reason he tells them *because the Trial of their Faith would work Patience, and when Patience had her perfect Work they would be entire, wanting nothing*. This would teach them to silence their Fears, and check their Desires, and in a great measure make them independent upon the Accidents of Life. In short, since Crosses and Disappointments give the most undeniable Evidence of our Integrity; since they afford us the best Opportunities for the exercise of the noblest Virtues, and are the most effectual Means to make us exemplary and considerable; it is mean and unmanly not to be easy and contented under 'em, especially when we consider farther, that this Life is only appointed us as a State of Probation, and that the Day of Recompense is to come hereafter. Had Men been to have receiv'd according to their Works in this World, then Splendor and Prosperity would have been the infallible

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Marks of Virtue and Goodness. Then what the Psalmist observes would have been the literal Privilege of every one that did righteously: *He would not be afraid for any Terror by Night, nor for the Arrow that flieth by Day; for the Pestilence that walketh in Darkness, nor for the Destruction that wasteth in Noon-day.* But God has thought fit to order Things otherwise; for if the Reward of Virtue was always visible and present, if *Godliness* was always *present Gain*, if the *ways of Wisdom* were *ways of sensual Pleasantry*, then would the Covetous, the Ambitious, and the Voluptuous press into the Service, and serve Heaven that they might serve their Appetites the better. But God intends not to make us happy at so cheap a Rate; he has set the Purchase of Glory higher, and 'tis by struggling with and conquering our Passions here, that we must expect to receive the Crown of Glory hereafter. And now since God has made this Life for the Proof of our Constancy and Obedience, to be uneasy and discontented looks as if we thought we did too much for Heaven, and over-purchas'd the Joy of Eternity. The last Consideration I shall mention to recommend Contentment, is the Pleasure and Satisfaction it affords to the Mind. There is no Condition of Life into which we can be cast, but this Virtue will go along with us and comfort us. If we are depriv'd by Death of our Friends, or if a sick Bed be our Lot; if our Houses are rifled, and

a Prison be our Habitation, there still Contentment dwells, and sooths all our Sorrows. He that enjoys this happy Temper of Mind, is free and undisturb'd in every Circumstance of Life; his Spirits do not rise and fall with his Condition. The actual suffering of Adversity does not disorder him, much less the uncertain Fears of it. He relies upon his Innocence and his God, and on this Foundation he stands fix'd as a Rock. Though all the Waves and Storms of Affliction beat against him from without, still he remains calm and unshaken within, and, like Mount *Sion*, cannot be removed, but stands fast for ever. Though the World may be Master of his Fortune, yet he has always his Reason and his Passions in his own Power. His Mind is impregnable, and all the Shocks of Disappointment can neither deprive him of his Principles or Peace, till after, however painful, yet short Duration here, he shall be rewarded with an eternal Weight of Glory. While we have this View, let us, as the Apostle directs, *be careful for nothing; but in every thing by Prayer and Supplication make our Requests known unto God.* And the Peace of God, which passeth all Understanding, shall keep our Hearts and Minds through Christ Jesus.

To whom, &c.



On the Doctrines and Example of
CHRIST.

MATTH. XI. 29.

Learn of me.

SO compleat and excellent is that System of Morality deliver'd down to us in the New Testament, and so agreeable are the practical Precepts, inculcated by our Saviour, to the Light of Nature and Reason; so happily calculated for the Good of Society, and so naturally tending to promote every Man's Happiness in particular, that the most inveterate Enemies of our holy Religion, amidst the many Queries and Objections they have started against other Doctrines contain'd in it, have never been bold enough to attempt it on this Part; and whilst they persist in denying the divine Mission of its Author are compell'd to acknowledge the Divinity of its Laws. No other Religion that ever appear'd in the World, nor all the so-much-talk'd-of Philology of the Antients, ever gave Men either such suitable Apprehensions of the Deity, or furnish'd them with such a Set of Rules for the

the Direction of their Lives. To be satisfied in the Truth of the Existence of a God, and to have right and just Notions of his Nature and Attributes, are the great Foundations of all Religion. Most indeed of the old Philosophers own the Belief of a Deity, but they had none of them adequate Apprehensions of his Nature. They described him as a Being to be dreaded more than to be beloved by Mankind, and look'd on him as one delighting in Cruelty and Revenge; and for that Reason endeavour'd to appease him by barbarous and inhuman Sacrifices. But the Christian Religion gives us a more perfect and lovely Character of the Divine Nature. It represents him to us as an omnipotent, pure, and holy Spirit; and directs us to worship him in a Manner agreeable to such a Nature. And this Representation of the Deity is every way the most consonant to the Light of Nature and Reason. As he is an omnipotent Spirit, he has the Power of Creation and Preservation, and of informing his Creatures with Life and Motion; and from our Knowledge of this, we have the most rational Account of the Cause of what we see about us, and find in ourselves. As he is a pure Spirit, he is free from those warring Passions, with which our Breasts are inflam'd, and consequently can have no Inducements to be cruel and vindictive. *He created all Things for his Pleasure.* But an holy Being can take no Pleasure in the Sufferings

Example of CHRIST.

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Sufferings of his Creatures. He can have no Interest in our Service — it must be therefore for our own Benefit that he requires Obedience at our Hands. Our Disobedience can no way molest him — he is therefore *slow to punish, of great Mercy and Long-suffering.* He can have no Envy or Ambition, for he is Supreme of all Things himself; no Thirst of Revenge, for he is incapable of being injur'd; nor any Malice or Ill-will, for *he created all Things as they are.* He must therefore necessarily be good to all, and *his tender Mercies must be over all his Works.* — And as our holy Saviour in his Religion has given us the most natural, perfect, and lovely Character of the Divine Nature; so from him we may likewise learn the most certain and perfect Rules for the Direction of ourselves in his Service, and the Government of our own Lives. All his Precepts and Institutions are rational, just and wise, approving themselves to our Understandings, and agreeable to our Nature and Being; such as are useful and beneficial to Society, tending to promote the universal Happiness of Mankind, to perfect our Natures and exalt our Mind. He has injoin'd nothing that is unreasonable, burdensome or needless, nor has omitted any thing which could tend to our Welfare or the Honour of our Creator. He has required nothing of us but what is agreeable to the regular Inclinations of our Nature, our Reason and true Interest; Nor has he forbid

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us any thing but what is unworthy or unprofitable, a Reproach to our Understandings, and a Prejudice both to publick and private Prosperity. So that if we take a View of the Doctrines of our Saviour, and consider the practical Duties enjoin'd in his Religion, we shall plainly perceive that they do all together make up a far more consistent and rational Scheme of Belief, than any other System that was ever invented, or proposed to Mankind. And we must inevitably be convinced of the Truth of that Religion, that agrees with the highest Apprehensions we can have of the supreme Being, and with the most just and natural Principles we feel within ourselves.

But that the internal Excellency of the Christian Religion, and the Divinity of its Author may appear more conspicuous, let us take a more particular View of what our Saviour has taught us, both by his Doctrine and Example.

In the first place then, let us see what we may learn from our Saviour's Doctrine.

He tells us that he came down from Heaven to shew us the Way thither, *to bring us from Darknes to Light, and from the Power of Satan to God*—to instruct us in the true Knowledge of our great Creator, and inform us of the Means whereby we might approve ourselves to him. In a word, to teach us the Duty we owe to God, our Neighbour, and ourselves. With regard to God he tells us, that

that we must inwardly reverence and love him, outwardly worship and profess him — that we should acknowledge our Dependence on his Providence, and testify our Confidence in his Goodness by constant Prayers and Supplications to him — that we should gratefully own our Obligations for the Benefits we are continually receiving, by as continual Thanksgivings and Praises to his Name. That we should carefully avoid entertaining unsuitable Apprehensions of him, nor pay to any other the Honour which is due to him alone, but should worship him in a Manner agreeable to the Excellency and Perfection of his Nature, *in Spirit and in Truth* — that we should freely and chearfully submit ourselves to his Government and Disposal, by bringing our Wills into Conformity to his holy Will; for this good Reason, because *we are nothing* (he tells us) *ourselves, but God is all in all.* That 'tis his Word that enlightens our Understandings, his Spirit that directs our Wills, his Providence that presides over our Affairs: That all good Things whatsoever come from him, and that nothing is truly estimable, but what makes us acceptable to him. And that we may not satisfy ourselves with saying, that our Inclinations are upright, he farther teaches us, that we must testify the Sincerity of our Hearts, by bringing forth the visible Fruits of good Works. That we must demonstrate the Reality of our inward Love to
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our Creator, by real Acts of Mercy, Justice and Beneficence to our Fellow-Creatures. He not only enforces all the Dictates of Nature concerning the Equity and Truth we are to exercise towards our Neighbour, but has likewise made several noble and rational Improvements to those social Duties. Such as to bear Injuries patiently, rather than return Evil for Evil; to be always willing to forgive one another their Trespases as we all expect ourselves a Forgiveness from God. He commands universal Love, Good-Will and Kindness amongst men; a Readiness to pardon our greatest Enemies, and even to do good to them that hate us, in imitation of our Heavenly Father, who *maketh the Sun to rise on the Evil and on the Good, and indiscriminately sends his Rain on the Just and Unjust*. He warmly admonishes us to be generous and good-natur'd, to be kind and obliging to one another, tender-hearted and compassionate towards any in Distress. To be mutual Partakers of one another's Joys, and tender Sympathisers in one another's Afflictions: *To mourn with those that mourn, and rejoice with those that rejoice*. He instructs us likewise in every Thing that tends to the Welfare and Peace of Society, and commands our Obedience to God's Vicegerents here on Earth. He requires our Submission to human Laws for securing Mens Properties, and orders us to be subject to the Government that protects us.

In like manner he not only enjoins us the natural Duties of Temperance, Patience, and Contentment, with regard to ourselves; but has likewise given us several additional Precepts and wise Instructions in this Part of our Duty: Teaching us not only to deny all Ungodliness and worldly Lust in our Actions, but likewise to purify our very Thoughts, Desires, and Inclinations — to contemn and get above all the delusive Vanities of the present World, and place our Affections there, where everlasting Joys are to be found. He recommends whatever Things are pure and chaste, lovely and of good Report — all Temperance and Sobriety, Abstinence and Moderation. And sure this is something more than bare Philosophy could ever teach — Things above what pure Nature could ever suggest, or unassisted Reason ever find out. Yes! 'tis evident, that as the Doctrines here mention'd are divine, so is the Author of them — as *they* came down from Heaven, so did He — as *they* are worthy to be reveal'd by God, so was He worthy to be sent by Him. 'Tis manifest he was one who was intimately acquainted with Human Nature, knew all Mens Wants and Infirmities, and knew how to apply suitable Remedies to every Distemper. — Moreover, as our Saviour plainly and openly taught Men by his Sermons and Discourses, so he likewise delivered many noble Instructions to them in useful and entertaining Parables and Similitudes; making

making it his Business at once to instruct and delight — to excite Mens Attention, by gratifying their Curiosity, and to quicken their Memory, by applying to their Fancy. In the Parable of the Prodigal, our Saviour describes, in the most lively Colours, the Follies and Madness of an extravagant Way of Life, and the Hardships and Miseries it generally brings Men to; and yet notwithstanding the Hainousness of such Offences, how ready our heavenly Father is to meet those who return to him, and how willing to pass over their repeated Provocations. — The Parable of the good *Samaritan* very appositely teaches us, that we ought to extend our Kindness to all that stand in need of our present Help and Assistance, how much soever they differ from us in Persuasion or Interest. In a word, every one of our Saviour's Similitudes and Parables, and all his Discourses, whether plain or more reserved, are directiy intended to make Men wiser, happier, and better: To point to them their true Interest and Felicity, and instruct them in the most natural and rational Methods of acquiring them. And as this was the whole Scope and Design of his Doctrine, so

Secondly, we may farther *learn of him* from his Example and Behaviour, which was every way agreeable to his Precepts and Instructions. He first of all practis'd himself whatever he taught others, and laid no Burden on his Followers,

lowers, but what he previously and willingly underwent himself: He did not, like most Law-givers; sit down contented with having prescrib'd a Rule of Action to other Men, but recommended it by a constant and powerful Example. Nor like most of the Philosophers, who talk'd finely indeed of Virtue and Morality, wrote very well on the Passions, and gave excellent Rules for the Conquest and Government of them, while they themselves liv'd indolent, unactive, and often vicious; were swell'd up with Vanity and Pride, and frequently inflam'd with the most turbulent Passions. But our Saviour on the contrary was an eminent Pattern to us as well as Director. Humility and a patient Submission to the Dispensations of Providence, Charity, and a noble Contempt of the World, are the peculiar Doctrines of the Christian Religion. And his Life was a constant Instance of these eminent Virtues. He made it his Meat and Drink to do the Will of him that sent him: It was the glorious Business of his Life *to go about doing Good*. He submitted to the meanest Offices for the Benefit of others, and was at every one's Command that stood in need of his Assistance. He condescended to the vilest Company, (that of Publicans and Sinners,) when he had any Prospect of making them otherwise; and was even content to lose the Reputation of being a good Man himself, rather than lose the Opportunity of making others so. Never did

so much Goodness meet with such ungrateful Returns; and yet was he not the least discouraged from going on as he had begun: Unwearied in well-doing he still endeavour'd to conquer Mens Malice by Kindness, and overcome Evil with Good. When *he was reviled he reviled not again, but committed his Cause to him that judgeth righteously.* And as he patiently endured the Affronts and Reproaches of the World, so he despised the Vanities and tinsel Glories of it: To teach Men by his Behaviour in every Condition, to have an equal Mind both in Prosperity and Adversity: To comfort themselves under Misfortunes and Ill-usage, with the Testimony of a blameless Conscience, and a patient Expectation of God's righteous Judgment: To value that Honour only which comes from God, and to esteem the glittering Trifles of this World as of no worth, in comparison of our Creator's Favour, and the unseen Glories of the World to come. Such was our Saviour's Behaviour in the World, and so excellent an Example has he given us, that we should follow his Steps. He never said any thing but what tended to our Admonition or Well-doing, nor did any Action but what convey'd an useful Instruction along with it. All the Miracles he wrought for the Confirmation of his Mission and Doctrine, were in themselves really useful and beneficial to Mankind, and no way design'd to surprise Men or gratify their Curiosity

holity: Instructing us thereby that all Power ought to be employ'd in doing good; and giving us at the same time an Instance of his Love and Kindness to Mankind, and an Assurance of God's gracious Purposes towards them. When he gave Sight to the Blind, he at the same time open'd the Eyes of their Understandings, that they might see the Day spring on high, which was come to visit them. When he made the Deaf to hear, he prepared them to receive with Joy the glad Tidings of the Gospel: And when he cleansed the Lepers from their Impurity, he likewise acquainted them that he would purge them from the Pollution of their Sins. — Thus powerfully was our Saviour's Doctrine seconded by his Example, and so suitable was his own Behaviour in the World to the Rules of Action which he enjoin'd to others; and both of these were yet more strongly confirm'd by the Manner and Circumstances of his Death. Here the Virtues of Charity, Humility, and Resignation to God's Will, which are the particular Glories of his Life, appear with a more eminent and conspicuous Lustre. Out of his fervent Charity he spent his Life in the Service of Mankind, and now he laid it down to be a Ransom for many. In great Humility he took upon him the Form of a Servant, and now he submits to be number'd amongst the Transgressors. He gave the greatest Demonstration of his Charity in dying even for his

Enemies, and offering up his Blood as well as Prayers for their Redemption that shed it. Thus teaching us by his Example both how to live and how to die. And thus we have taken a cursory View of what our Saviour in the Text requires us to *learn of him*; from whence the internal Excellency of the Christian Religion, and Divinity of its Author appear infinitely superior to those of any other; as it gives us the most rational Account of the Nature of God, and directs us to worship him in the most plain and suitable Manner; as it explains in the clearest Way the Duty we owe to our Neighbour, and ourselves, and gives us the most excellent Instructions for our Direction and Government in every Condition of Life. But further, as it sets before us these admirable Laws and Examples, so it likewise requires our Observance and Imitation of them in the strictest Manner, and enforceth them by the strongest Motives. It proposes infinite Happiness to us as the Reward of our Obedience, and threatens an Eternity of Torment as a Punishment, for Non-compliance. It assures us that the Effect of Virtue even in this World, is Peace and Prosperity, and that the Consequence of Vice is only Misery and Dissatisfaction: It gives us the greatest Encouragement to induce us to be virtuous, and turn from Iniquity; such as the Assurance of our Sins being pardon'd upon a sincere Repentance; the gracious Acceptance of our weak Endeavours.

Endeavours; the supernatural Assistance of God's Spirit to support us under Trials and Afflictions; the Perfection and Exaltation of our Nature and Faculties; — and the Recompence of a Heaven of Happiness in the World to come. So that after all that the present Advocates for Infidelity and Deism can say, it must be acknowledg'd that the Christian Religion not only supposes and builds upon the receiv'd Principles of natural Religion, but likewise improves and enforces them, by placing them in a better Light, and giving us greater Evidence for them than bare Reason could suggest.

Since therefore the Religion which is taught us by our Saviour, every way answers all the Ends of Revelation: Since it supplies the Deficiencies of natural Light, proposes suitable Remedies to all the Defects of human Nature, sets forth natural Truths in their proper Light, and discovers supernatural ones in a Manner agreeable to the Majesty of God, and most effectual to the Satisfaction of the Minds of Men: With what Reverence and Attention, with what Joy and Gladness ought we *to learn of him*, the Author of eternal Happiness, and the only infallible Guide and Conductor thither: Let us embrace his Religion as the Revelation of God's holy Will and Purposes to Mankind, and let us be never shaken in our Faith, either by the open Assaults or sly Insinuations of its modern Opposers. Let us

learn of him who is the gentlest Master and kindest Instructor, who will have Compassion on our Ignorances and help our Infirmities, who will supply our Imperfections with his own all-sufficient Merits, and reward those good Works which he himself has wrought in us with an Eternity of Glory.

But in a more particular Manner, at this solemn Season in which we commemorate the first Appearance of this divine Lawgiver amongst Men, let us manifest our Belief of his holy Mission, and our Attachment to his Doctrine, by a more strenuous Practice of the Duties he has enjoin'd us: Instead of employing this holy Season in Vanity and Folly, let us join with the heavenly Host in Songs of Praise and Thanksgiving; and instead of running into Scenes of Extravagance, Sensuality and Riot, let us apply ourselves to the Reformation of our Manners and the Amendment of our Lives. Let us renew our Covenant with our Saviour, and resolve to be true Disciples of him who *was made manifest in the Flesh, that he might destroy the Works of the Devil*; and by pointing out to us the way of Life and Truth, to rescue us from that Darkness that had overspread the World, and the more fatal one that would have succeeded it, to place us in those celestial Mansions, where there is Light and Happiness for evermore.



ON TRUE WISDOM.

PROVERBS iii. 21, 22.

Keep sound Wisdom and Instruction: So shall they be Life to thy Soul, and Grace to thy Neck.

THE Royal Author of the Book from whence these Words are selected, has under the Name of *Wisdom* pictur'd out Religion to us in the most amiable and enchanting Form imaginable; he has represented her as a fair and elegant Mistress, worthy of the Adoration and Addresses of all Mankind: *Happy is the Man*, he tells us, *that findeth her*; for *she is more precious than Rubies*; and all we can desire is not to be compar'd unto her. *Length of Days is in her Right-hand, and in her Left-hand Riches and Honour. Her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace. She is a Tree of Life to them that lay hold upon her*; and happy is every one that retaineth her. And yet notwithstanding all he says both of her Amiability and Dignity, the fine Gentlemen of our wiser Age can see no Beauty they should desire in her, and will neither allow her Form nor Comeliness. No; these Men of

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Spirit and Politeness, as they are call'd, or vainly fancy themselves, look upon Piety as an absurd and ill-natur'd Contradiction to all the innocent and pleasurable Freedoms of Conversation; a Principle of Meanness of Soul and Rudeness of Behaviour; and think that a Man, as soon as he commences a good Christian, is abandon'd to Formality and Preciseness, to Aukwardness of Address and Contradiction of Mind: In short, to make use of their own Expression, he must no longer think of maintaining the Character of a *Gentleman*.

It shall therefore be the Business of this Discourse to rescue Religion from these slovenly and degrading Imputations, to prove it to be graceful and an ornamental Qualification, and that in its own Nature it very highly contributes to polish and civilize the World. And indeed if we would only take a cursory View of the Precepts of the Christian Institution, we should find nothing in them but what tended to the present Pleasure and Satisfaction as well as future Interest of Mankind: In short, there is not any one Pleasure and Gratification, any single Amusement or genteel Accomplishment, but what is allow'd of by the Christian Religion in as large a Proportion and as high a Degree as a Man who is govern'd by the Dictates of natural Reason would allow them to himself. Had Christ indeed like *Mahomet* enjoin'd his Followers tedious Fastings, painful Pilgrimages, and what to some would have been

been much worse, a total Abstinence from Wine, I should not wonder if many cry'd out, *'Tis a hard Saying who can bear it*; but, to their great Comfort, he has done no such thing. Had he like *Moses* requir'd a fat Bullock out of the Stall, or a Lamb from the Fold as a Sacrifice for our Sins, no Wonder if the Miser, like the worldly-minded *Gadarenes*, drove away his Saviour to preserve his Swine: But Christ puts us to no Charge at all in obeying him, his Service is perfect Freedom.

Again, had the Rites and Ceremonies of Christianity, like those of Paganism, been many of them so obscene that Modesty must blush at them, and so cruel and bloody as to startle Humanity itself, or like those of the *Jews* so very nice and unaccountable, so very numerous and difficult that it was a *Yoke*, as the Apostle observes, *which they were not able to bear*; had this been the Case, we might have had some Ground of Complaint: But this is so far from being the Case, that there is not one Rite of Ceremony through the whole Course of our Profession, but what is comely, easy, and humane. In a word, Christianity (let your wou'd-be Wits and fine Gentlemen rally it as long as they please) is the only true Wisdom; whilst the best System of true Politeness, let it appear ever so great a Paradox, is to be met with in the New Testament.

In order to prove this, we must exclude all those mistaken Notions of Wisdom and phantastick

tastick Schemes of Politeness which are apt to dazzle the unthinking Part of Mankind, all the outward Pomp of State and Grandeur, and more especially, all those fashionable Refinements of Vice which are as contradictory to common Sense, as they are offensive to pure Religion, and confine ourselves to such Qualities as the rational Notion of good Sense and true Gentility necessarily implies.

The being carried about in gilt Cars trick'd out in foreign Gewgaws, and convoy'd by a Troop of Domesticks, are far from being Proofs of true Gentility. An Ape may be as polite as an Emperor in these Respects: Nor does it consist in being at the Head of fashionable Amusements, or in having what is call'd a Taste for the politer Arts and Sciences. For even these very Circumstances, as a noble Writer observes, may be the Causes perhaps of the want of true Politeness. The Elegance of our Fancy in outward Things, may have made us overlook the Worth of inward Beauty and Proportion. As Wit, without Temper and Judgment, can never form a Man of true Sense, so a decent Address in Company, or a refin'd Taste in Arts, without the inward Symmetry and Order of Mind, can never constitute true Gentility.

Where then, you'll say, is this inward Beauty to be found, and by what Means may we discover and arrive at the Attainment of it? Why 'tis by keeping this sound Wisdom in the
Text;

Text; 'tis by calling back our deluded Fancies from the Power of Fashion and Custom, to the Direction of Reason and Conscience. For let a Man have never so much of the fashionable Wisdom of this World, yet as this Wisdom is only speculative, and has not that Influence on our Practice as the religious and sound Wisdom recommended in the Text, it only serves to a more inexcusable Conviction of our Folly.

In antient *Rome* when the Empire was at its Height, and Learning and Arts grown into Reputation among them; 'twas the Fashion for such as aim'd at being accomplish'd Gentlemen to frequent Philosophical Conferences, and to entertain the Company with Specimens of their Study and Learning. In consequence to this it happen'd, that others, who had neither Parts nor Industry to accomplish themselves in this Manner, and yet were ambitious to share in the Honour, made it their Practice to purchase learned Slaves out of *Greece*, and to carry those about with them whatever Company they went into; All the Wit or Learning the Slaves could produce, the Masters look'd on as their own, and took the Glory of it to themselves.

However ridiculous the Affectation of this Practice may appear, it is but too just an Emblem of the Generality of Mankind, priding themselves with the Attainment of mistaken Wisdom. For whilst we are pleasing ourselves with the Knowledge of Arts and Sciences, with the Insight into Politicks and Laws, with

with the Flights of Genius or the Force of Judgment, our Understanding, the Faculty where true Wisdom lies, is all the while very often no other than a gaudy Slave in the lowest Servitude to Passion and Appetite. These like the *Roman Gallant* rule and command, and that like the poor *Greek* only serves to furnish Matter to our Vanity; So that we are not really one Jot the wiser for all the Wisdom we carry about us. We make an outward Flourish and Figure, whilst the inward and nobler Part is still barren and neglected; which is like a Man's shewing great Skill and Understanding in the choice of Paintings and Curiosities to furnish his House with, when an Enemy is burning the Town all the while. No, 'tis the *sound Wisdom*, that is to say, *Religion*, which is recommended by the wisest of Men in the Text, that is worth the keeping. This carries along with it true Elegance and Beauty, and furnishes out a just Taste in Life and Manners: 'Tis this that by modulating and tuning us within, and shedding over our Faculties true Harmony and Comeliness, which will infallibly produce an outward Grace and Gentility of Deportment, and which, as the same Author observes, *will be an Ornament of Grace unto our Heads, and a Bracelet about our Necks*. Let us then examine some of the principal and most reasonable Pretensions made to Wisdom and good Breeding by the more refin'd Part of the World, and see what Improvement the
Christian

Christian Religion, if properly practis'd, would make to them.

The first I shall remark upon is, the Principle of *Honour*, which has always bore a high Vogue in the World, and is a Form generally made use of to express a Man of Worth;

That it is a very good Qualification is certain, but it seldom or ever goes far enough; and we may without much Difficulty perceive how unable it is to stand alone, and how necessarily it requires the Assistance of Conscience to support and strengthen, to correct and give it its right Turn.

The general Difference that is made between Honour and Conscience is, that the one relates to great, the other to good Actions; but if we examine this Difference more closely, we shall find it to be really nothing; because there seem to be no Acts of Greatness, which are not likewise Acts of Goodness; and one and the same Definition may serve them both, *viz. such Acts as best suit the Dignity of our Being, and the Nature of our several Relations.* Conscience therefore, when regulated by our most holy Religion, is, in this View, a Principle of acting much superior to that of bare Honour; because it recommends Virtue to our Practice, under far stronger Lights and higher Motives.

Again, Honour is deficient; because, without the support of Conscience, it is liable to abundance of Failures.

If

If we consider the Behaviour of those Men, who have been esteem'd Men of mere Honour, we shall very seldom find their Character good throughout; because it is regulated rather by Opinion than Reason, and acts more upon Fashion than Sobriety of Judgment: Accordingly we find that several false Methods are taken of establishing the Character of this Principle.

One Man, for Instance, imagines that nothing derogates from this Principle so much, as Inconstancy of Mind and Inconsistency of Action, and therefore cherishes the Spirit of Stubbornness, and maintains at all Adventures whatever he hath once espoused: If his Zeal be exercised in the Cause of Truth and Virtue, it is his good Fortune; he might as well have appeared in Defence of the quite contrary. Now Conscience would do well to strike in here, to soften that Stiffness, to teach that there is as much Glory in retracting an Error, as in defending the Truth; that tho' to stem the impetuous Torrent of fashionable Scandals be the Bravery, yet to fall in with the Stream, when the Stream flows the right Way, is likewise the Duty of this Principle; and there is but little Credit in a Man's being compared to a Rock for its Constancy, when the Comparison will hold throughout, and take in likewise its Insensibility.

Again, we find that another Man makes Fashion the Measure of his Honour; and then

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he gives himself up entirely to the Humour of the World; and therefore acts by a very false Rule, because what is really base and scandalous is frequently determined by the Multitude to be greatly generous and commendable: And on the contrary, Things truly noble and praise-worthy, are very often, in the current Notions of the World, degraded into what is mean and contemptible: He acts likewise by a very uncertain Rule, because, as the Custom and Fashion of the World is continually shifting, so upon these Grounds his Honour must be continually changing its Direction: Conscience therefore is equally necessary here, in order to settle and support that Pliancy, which flows to and fro with every Tide of Popularity, and to fix his Methods of acting upon the unchangeable Foundation of Truth and Virtue.

Again, we often find that Honour is a partial Rule of acting, and he who acts upon this Principle rightly in one Respect, will act notoriously against it in many others: Thus some, who would scorn to injure their Neighbour either in Goods or Reputation, would think it no Diminution of their Honour to injure him in a much tenderer Point; and would look upon polluted Beds, and the violated Sacredness of Marriage-Ties, to bear no small Share in the polite and genteel Part of their Character.

But

But among the many Instances of false Honour, none are so seriously defended and deliberately transacted, as the gratifying an ungovern'd lawless Revenge in the Practice of Duelling, and the unnatural Cowardise of Self Murder.

The former of these is so professedly a Part of a Gentleman's Character, that his Honour is entirely lost who will not be ready, on occasion, to engage in an Act, that is not only offensive to the Laws of God and Man, but to Reason and Common Sense: A slight Affront is given, and the Death of him who gave it shall be the Satisfaction. But is there any Honour in Revenge, and a Thirst for Blood? How far is such Brutality removed from the divine Generosity of answering Injuries with Kindness, and Hatred with Good-will? Or if we take it in another View; we have received one Injury, and are not contented with that; our Adversary cannot acquit himself like a Man of Honour, if he will not endeavour to do us a much greater: He hath taken away our Reputation, and we will give him a fair Chance for our Life too: The first Injury was base and scandalous, but by doing a second, he will make an ample and generous Amends. This is the true Language of Duelling, and did this Place allow it, it might be made to appear as ridiculously absurd, as it is abominably impious.

The Case of Self-Murder, upon any severe Affliction, is either an insolent Defiance or a desperate Distrust of God's Providence; as tho' the Almighty should not impose upon us what Punishments or Terms of Probation he thinks fit; or as tho' his Providence could not free us from, or his Grace support us under, any Afflictions whatever: And how far is all this removed from true Honour? It is a Rashness, it is a Meanness of Soul.

In all these Cases, Conscience is necessary to enlarge our Views, to instruct us that every Part of our Duty is truly honourable, and therefore every Part of it, upon the foot of Honour, is to be perform'd.

Thus mere Honour is liable to abundance of Failures, because it very much depends upon the Humours of Men; but Conscience receives its Measures of acting from the Will of God, and is therefore a steady and uniform Principle: It keeps its Duty in constant View, is obstinately persevering in well-doing, and takes in the whole Scope of Virtue. Honour is apt to yield to Hardships, Conscience can surmount them all; and where mere Honour will almost unavoidably be subdued, Conscience will triumph over Shame itself.

The next boasted Accomplishment is that of Good-nature; and an excellent one it is, but it will require no great Difficulty to shew how superior the Principle of Christian Charity is above the common Principle of Good-nature,

nature, and what Improvements it makes to it.

Now Good-nature is rather a Temper than a Virtue; and he that is endued with it, is indebted more to his Constitution than his Acquisitions for it: It is indeed a very amiable Quality, and covers a Multitude of Imperfections itself; but till it is improved into the Virtue of Christian Charity, we cannot conceive very highly of its Excellency. When it is attended with a large Fortune, it generally breaks out into abundant Munificence, and glaring Acts of Liberality, and degenerates into a Principle of inconsiderate Lavishness: It scatters its Favours, it knows not where, nor why; so that its Acts of Generosity are frequently made subservient to scandalous Purposes, and the Goodness of the Nature is destroyed by the Vileness of its Effects: It is much more studious to gratify than to serve Mankind, and by that Means appears in many different Shapes of Weakness and Extravagance.

That Softness of Temper, which will receive any Impressions; That Indolence which will admit of all Encroachments; That Profuseness which flows out in every Channel of Excess; That jovial Disposition which falls in with all Companies, and is ready to bear a part in every idle Frolick or vicious Intrigue, do all pass under the Notion of Good-nature: Which plainly shews, that the Principle of mere Good-nature doth really require great Manage-

Management, in order to be kept within the Bounds of Discretion, Reason, and even common Virtue itself.

But Charity rises from a variable Temper to an uniform Duty: Charity is diffusive without Prodigality, and strong without Fondness: It is bounded by nothing less than the Universe, and it makes the Love of ourselves the Measure of our Love towards all Mankind: It imitates the almighty Benefactor of Mankind in Strength, the Purity, the Sincerity of Affection: Nothing therefore but Benevolence can flow from it, and its Benevolence streams forth in every Instance of substantial Service: So that however the Principle of Good-nature may be belov'd and applauded, yet it is no other than weak and beggarly Elements in comparison of the Perfection of Gospel-Charity.

In the next Place let us consider Religion with respect to Good-Manners, which is the third fundamental Qualification of a Gentleman.

Here we must treat of Good-Manners, as seated in the inward Man, and not as entirely consisting in the outward Deportment of the Body; the latter is an accidental Circumstance only, but is frequently made use of to conceal the bad Tempers of the Mind. A good Mien, or Carriage of Body, most certainly sets off a good Temper of Mind; but the Spring of our good Behaviour must be within: Religion must form the Man, Virtue must adorn his Conversation, and Religion is decent and graceful in

every Action, Virtue is comely and engaging in every Motion. But there are two Gospel Duties only, which I would in this Place more particularly insist upon, *viz.* Meekness and Humility. St. Peter exhorts us to *be clothed with Humility*, and mentions *putting on the Ornament of a meek and quiet Spirit*; Terms highly expressive of that Grace and Lustre, which those Tempers of Mind shed over all our Actions: And indeed if Men would be as careful to possess their Souls of those two Virtues, as to form their Bodies to the outward Accomplishments of fashionable Address, the World would abound much more in Good-Manners, and be eased of a great deal of Insincerity: All That Complaisance and fine Breeding, which Mankind is so fond of, is only an outward Profession of, but is easily seen thro' if it be not founded upon, these Virtues: it is put to many Shifts to hide its Hypocrisy, and seldom meets with any other than insincere Returns for all its modish Instances of undesigning Civility: For Men are quick-sighted enough, and will never esteem him one of Good-Manners, who is such in Appearance only; who, to gain a Point, or comply with Fashion, will keep his Mind and Body upon the stretch to behave with Decorum, and practise over a few formal Ceremonies: But who, if he be taken in an unguarded Hour, in a Place where he does not think himself obliged to observe the Niceties of Behaviour,

is haughty and furious: A Lion in his House, and frantick among his Servants.

But the meek and humble Christian is ever affable and condescending, open and free in his Carriage, and procures that hearty Friendship from others, which he is ever ready to express towards them. Humility makes a Man perfectly easy in himself, and Meekness renders him entirely agreeable to others: The Cheerfulness of innocent Mirth is the constant Result of the former, a general Love and Esteem among his Acquaintance of the latter.

The Modesty of Deference to Superiors; the Agreeableness of preferring our Equals in Honour, and provoking them in Love; the engaging Methods of Condescension to Inferiors, the soft Diversions of Tenderness, which turn away Wrath; the mild Yieldings of Meekness, which pacify great Offences, are the ingratiating Circumstances of true Endearment; which produce all the Sweets of Conversation, without the Intermixture of those many Piques and Animosities, which a peevish, haughty Behaviour never fails to create and foment.

These are the Instances of Good-Manners which are really wanted in the World, and thus ought we to adorn our Lives, if we would do Justice to the Beauty and Majesty of the Gospel Institution. Sullenness and Severity of Behaviour, are no Parts of Christian Qualification; and therefore we ought to shed over our Devotion all that Lustre, which open Honesty and good Sense, which generous Kindness and

fine Breeding, can bestow to make it amiable: This, this is sound Wisdom, and all the Pretences to Wisdom of any other kind are vain and frivolous: For the World too often confers the Character of Wisdom upon several human Endowments and what are called genteel Accomplishments, yet not any of those Endowments or Accomplishments, no, nor all of 'em together, can prevent a Man from being a Fool. Many Proofs of this we meet in every Day's Experience, and many Examples of it are given us in holy Scripture. The rich Man in the Gospel for Instance, according to the vulgar Standard, must certainly pass for a very wise Man: He was Master of Business and Management, had improv'd his Estate, and enlarg'd his Barns, had heap'd together Wealth, and was wise enough to resolve to enjoy what he had got, and yet how emphatically is this Man pronounc'd a Fool in his Summons from God: *Thou Fool this Night shall thy Soul be requir'd of thee, and then whose shall those Things be that thou hast provided?*

Achitophel, a Man of such worldly Knowledge and Sagacity, that his Counsel upon all Occasions, as the sacred Story informs us, was as if a Man had enquir'd at the Oracle of God; and yet this mighty Man of Wisdom understood no better than to lay violent Hands upon himself, and, after a trifling Affront, to deprive himself at once both of the Enjoyments of this Life, and the Hopes of a future. Upon the whole then we see the Gracefulness and Generosity

Generosity of the Christian Religion; and how much superior the sound Wisdom it imparts, is to the fashionable Wisdom that the Generality of Men boast of. Here then let the Men of Station and Fortune, who know not the Brightness and Dignity of a truly Christian Behaviour, consider how they have mistaken their Character; and in a steady Performance of every Virtue form their Lives upon the exact Square of Gospel Duty: For true Honour is not that which standeth in outward Splendor, nor that is measured by glaring Popularity: Religion is the Excellency of Man, and Virtue is his real Perfection.

Here let those, the Goodness of whose Temper is inclin'd to overflow in Acts of Kindness, joyfully improve their natural Disposition into the Perfection of all Virtues, That of Christian Charity.

Here let those who labour to oblige the World, by appearing agreeable in Conversation, and graceful in Behaviour, learn to be what they desire to seem to be, modest, courteous, meek, and humble.

In short, let us all look up to our most holy Religion for our Accomplishments, and regulate our Behaviour by the Precepts of it: We shall thereby be held both in the Admiration of Men and the Favour of God; and those Virtues, which are an Ornament of Grace unto our Heads here, will become unto us a Crown of eternal Glory hereafter. *Amen.*



On doing as we would be done by.

MATT. vii. 12.

Therefore all Things whatsoever you would that Men should do unto you, do ye even so to them : For this is the Law and the Prophets.

DO as you would be done by, is a Maxim that waits at the Door of every one's Lips, but lodges in very few Hearts; the common Topick of Discourse, but too seldom, I fear, the Standard of Practice. *Jews* and *Gentiles* as well as *Christians* have extoll'd and admir'd it. Amongst the first it was embraced by the most eminent Party of them, the School of *Hillel*. Amongst the latter it is well known that *Severus*, one of the best and wisest of the *Roman* Emperors, was so charm'd with it that he caus'd it to be inscribed as his Motto upon his Banners. It may justly therefore seem a Wonder that so little Fruit should spring from so pregnant a Root. We are all very willing indeed to take the Advantage of it to ourselves; ready enough to ask others when we think that we are ill-treated by

by them, *If they are doing as they would be done by*, but too rarely put the same Question to ourselves. On the contrary, the Vices of Fraud and Deceit are become so fashionable that the Character of being an honest, good-natured Man is made to signify the same as *Fool*. Whilst Craft and Oppression lord it through the World as shining Characters; and to be able to crush a Brother, or outwit a Neighbour, is esteem'd an Indication of Wisdom and Policy. In opposition therefore to these prevailing Mischiefs, it shall be the Endeavour of the following Discourse to invite a Recovery of this abandon'd Precept, and to prove how much it is both our Duty and Interest *to do unto others whatsoever we would that they should do unto us*.

From the Words of the Text then the three following Enquiries naturally arise:

First, What is the Nature, Extent, and Excellency of the Rule itself?

Secondly, In what Sense it is said to be the *Law and the Prophets*?

And, lastly, what Inducements we have to put it in practice.

And First, as to the Nature of this Rule: It is the most plain and obvious; for as all Men have an equal Occasion to make use of it; so it is equally adapted to all Apprehensions. It only requires of us, that when we have any Transactions with our Neighbour, to change Places with him in our Thoughts,
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to suppose ourselves in his Condition, and he in ours, and then to look into our Breasts and put this plain Question to ourselves; Would I myself be content that another in the same Circumstances should thus deal with me? If not, why then do I act in this Manner towards him?

And as this is to be the Rule of our Actions to Men in all Circumstances and Conditions, so it is likewise to extend to all Men whatever. We are required to observe it, not only towards Friends and Benefactors, but towards Enemies and the Injurious; not only towards those of the same Country or Communion, but towards all of whatsoever Persuasion or Climate. It is to be extended to all kinds of Action and Intercourse, to Matters of Charity and Beneficence, as well as Equity and Justice, and to negative as well as positive Duties. It obliges publick Societies as well as private Persons: Governors and the Governed are bound by it alike; so that without Distinction, without Limitation, it takes in the whole Species. Whoever bears the Impress of God on his Forehead, though he carry that of the Beast on his Heart, is still to be treated agreeable to this rule.

But excellent as this Rule is, and to be practised universally, yet it is not an absolute or unlimited one; because there may happen a great many Cases, wherein we are by no means obliged to grant that to others which

we ourselves, were we to change Circumstances, might desire, unreasonably desire of them. For though we might not desire any thing, which comes not to us under the Notion of Good, yet through the Weakness of our Understandings, and the Power our Passions have to corrupt their Sentence, we frequently take that for Good which is very far from being such, and covet rather Things suitable to the debauched Relish of our Tempers than what is agreeable to Truth and Equity. And if our Desires be excessive and irregular, those Actions will be also such which receive their Measures from them, and consequently can never be supposed to be any Part of our Saviour's Meaning. A Benefactor, for Instance, is by no means oblig'd to grant unmerited Favours to every one that asks of him, though conscious that he might himself have such extravagant Desires were he ever to become the Object of another's Beneficence. A Magistrate in order to deal equitably with a Criminal is not to consider what Fear or Self-Love would cause him to desire, was he in the place of the Offender, but What Reason and the Publick Good would oblige him to acknowledge was fit for him to expect. So that in practising this Rule we are obliged to do unto others not what any unreasonable Passion or private Interest would prompt us to desire of them, but what is fit and lawful for us to demand, and would be base and inhuman in them to refuse.

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This Rule, thus limited, the Equity of it is so very apparent that there's little or no Occasion for a solemn Proof of it. This is a Maxim which we all assent to, not by Force of Arguments, or any long Train of Consequences, but it masters our Understandings by its native Evidence; and those who swerve from it the most in Practice are still obliged to acknowledge the Justice of it in Theory. There must be necessarily some just Measure, some common Standard by which all Men are mutually obliged to regulate their Conduct; and there can possibly no better be invented and fixed on than that equal and righteous Rule of the Text. There is an actual Equality of Nature in all Men, and a Possibility of Equality of Condition too one Time or other; and therefore 'tis naturally fit and reasonable that we should carry an even Hand between ourselves and our Neighbours, and deal with them, as in a Change of Circumstances we would wish to be dealt with ourselves. *For this is the Law and the Prophets.* It is that Uprightness, which is required by the Law, as expounded and confirm'd by the Prophets; which seems to be thus express'd, in opposition to the vain Ceremonies and Observances of the then Pharisaeical Tribe; shewing them that Christ's Doctrine is entirely agreeable to the Law, taken in a right Sense, and that whatever Rules of the second Table are delivered in the Law of *Moses*, and afterwards explain'd and insisted

insisted on by the Prophets, are virtually contained in this Precept: And further, it might be shewn, that not only our Duty to our Fellow-Creatures, but that we owe to our Creator, is likewise included in it; but I shall confine myself to the former, and point out a few Instances wherein it tends to the Good both of publick Communities and private Persons.

First then, a due Attention to this Rule would in a great Measure prevent the Wars and Bloodshed, which make such Havock in the World. For though it by no Means restrains its Professors from a just and necessary War, to preserve the Possessions or support the Rights of a People; yet it would prevent that Cruelty and Rapine, that Desolation of Countries and Convulsions of Kingdoms, which are not more the Infelicities than the Reproach of Mankind, and would hinder Princes from unjustly invading one another's Dominions, and involving whole Nations in Blood, through a Thirst of Ambition only, or merely for what they could get. It is said, that the *Turks* before they enter upon a War consult their Great Mufti or High-Priest, about the Lawfulness of the Enterprize; and the *Pagans* of old used solemnly to advise with their Oracles in such Cases: But there is an Oracle in our own Breasts, which, if duly consulted, would soon determine the Legality as well as Necessity of any War. This would
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be like *Socrates's* Genius or good Angel, which was observed by himself generally to caution, but never to inflame him; which, I remember *Tully* says, is no more than the constant Genius of every wise Man. Nay, amongst the *Romans* themselves, who were a grasping and warlike Nation, they did not think every Thing lawful to them, that had the longest Swords: For their own Histories lay frequently a Blot upon such Achievements. So *Florus* leaves upon Record, that the War against *Crete* was occasioned by Avarice, and not Justice: And *Marcellinus*, speaking of the Enterprize upon *Cyprus*, says the very same Thing. Nay, *Petronius Arbiter* has blasted almost all the Glory of the *Roman Arms*, by saying, what may as justly be said of an over-reaching Neighbour of our own, That whatever Land or Region, be it ever so distant, had Gold and Treasures, it was sure to be deem'd an Enemy to *Rome*.

But if Princes and great States be not to be restrained by this Law, and Force must be the *ultima ratio Regum*, yet the Application of it between private Persons in their Commerce with one another, would be of the utmost Advantage, and have the greatest Influence upon human Affairs. This one easy, intelligible Rule would look Malice dead, and lay Envy a-bleeding at its Feet, smooth the Brow of Wrath, and give a Tincture to the pale Face of Revenge, and would prevent all those
Frauds

Frauds and Oppressions which the World is harass'd with, and which are otherwise scarcely curable by any Judicatories or Punishments that Governors can invent. For this detects, convicts, condemns and shames them at a Bar which no Man can appeal from, or except against. In human Judicatories Men may hope to conceal their Miscarriages, or at least to palliate them; or if that cannot be done, they can outface them at worst; they can hope either by Defect of Evidence to escape the Trial, or by Power or Pelf to elude the Judgment: But here a Man's self becomes his Witness and his Judge, and will give an irreversible Sentence against him. No Man therefore that consults this Oracle, will find in his Heart to oppress his Neighbour with Power, or vex him by Litigiousness; to undermine him by Fraud, or overreach him by Cunning; for it will inform him, that in so doing he by no Means acts agreeable to his own Desires and Expectations.

This taking an Estimate of others by ourselves, would likewise check that Torrent of fashionable Scandal and Detraction which at present overruns the World. For however we may deem it a polite Accomplishment, make it the Sauce to all our Conversation, and plume ourselves upon the Art of defaming well, yet if we would but look inward a little, lend an Ear to the Voice of Nature which commands us *to do as we would be done by*, it would soon
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make us tender of our Neighbour's Honour and Reputation. We could not but observe and be directed by this just, this equitable Admonition, unless, like the deaf Adder, we stop our Ears against the Charms of Justice, and cast Reason into a mortal Lethargy. For we think it but just that a candid Interpretation should be put upon our own Behaviour: If therefore we are but true to our own Principles, we should interpret other Mens Words and Actions in the same charitable Manner.

The Observation of this Precept would likewise cure that ill-natur'd Humour of upbraiding one another with past Follies or Miscarriages: 'Tis hard, no Time or Merit should efface human Misconduct; and we ourselves should be very loth to be reproached with the Follies we have overgrown, or the Vices we have repented of and forsaken; that Sorrow should not be allowed to cover our Shame, nor Repentance sufficient to draw a Veil over past Errors: Besides, this Practice is sure to recoil on those who are guilty of it; for those who are so inhumanly dealt by, will not fail to right themselves on such implacable Men by way of Reprisal. And who is there that has not Spots enough, if Envy pry into them? and whose Picture will not look hideous if drawn by Ill-nature in Gall and Soot? Who is there that has not been mistaken in his Youth? Who has not been tempted, surpris'd, and abus'd one time or other? Who has not
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had his Prejudices of Education, or been overseen in the Management of himself? So that if it must be the way of the World everlastingly to blaz on one another's Follies, he that has the best Opinion of himself will find he must fall in his Value, and be convinc'd that, by keeping alive the Failings of others, he has been as improvident to himself, as he was inexorable to them.

It is recorded by *Pausanias*, as the Wisdom of the *Macedonians*, that in none of their Conquests they ever erected any Trophies of their Victory, lest whilst they perpetuated the Memory of their Success, they perpetuated likewise the Quarrel, and by thus keeping alive the Remembrance of their Enemies Shame, they should keep alive their Hatred too, and provoke them to watch an Advantage by some fatal Revenge to expunge their own Infamy.

And now the Injustice and Inequality of the Proceeding we have been speaking against, is glaringly expos'd by the Rule in the Text. For surely I believe every one would be desirous that his own blind Side should be conceal'd; that a Veil should be drawn over his Blemishes, and an Act of Oblivion be pass'd upon his former Miscarriages; that he should be taken for what is, and not for what he was. Therefore, upon the Rule of Equity, thus should it be done by every one to his Neighbour.

The Observation of this Rule would likewise at once prevent most of those Severities that Christians use towards one another on the account of Religion. For as for those blind Zealots, who are always the most fierce and forward for Persecutions, though they have little or no Conscience, yet they cannot be without this Principle of Self-Love; so that by turning the Tables only, and changing the Scale, they cannot but see how Things look on both Sides. As for Example, I would fain have another be of my Opinion; yet since it will not look well to knock him o'the Head if he be not, for I find I would not be so dealt with in the like Case; and that he has as much Right to persecute me into his Opinion as I have to force him into mine; Or suppose, I should be glad that the Way I have chosen should be encourag'd, and the contrary discourag'd; yet, as by looking into myself I find I cannot be of another Opinion, I should not deem it meet to starve those that dissent from me, or to rack them up to my Standard.

On the other Side, as for those querulous People who are apt to complain before they are hurt, and reflect on their Governors under the Notion of Persecution; their Noise would be still'd, if they attended a little to this Rule of Equity. 'Tis true I would have my Conscience to myself, and think it very tyrannical that any body should impose upon me to believe as he pleases: But then, if I must have my

my own Opinion, must I have my Will too? Must I be uppermost in the State, and be put in Power and Authority equal with those of the establish'd Church, or else think myself persecuted? No sure, if I reflect upon myself a little, I should soon be convinc'd that if my Religion was the publick Establishment, and I in Power, I should certainly encourage and prefer those that thought as I did; and this too without incurring the odious Name of a Persecutor. Since therefore I should think it lawful to do this, were the Case my own, I cannot with any Reason complain if thus much and no more be done to me. In short, in the regular and uniform Observance of this Rule both in Church and State, both in publick and private Concerns, consists that universal Justice which is the Perfection of all Virtues, the Beauty of all Actions, and the Glory and Advantage of every rational Creature. It is that Rule of Righteousness, which, if generally practis'd, would introduce into the World that social Harmony and mutual Confidence which make up the supreme Happiness we are capable of in this Life. Impartial unbounded Justice is the Queen of moral Virtues, all the rest are of her Train and Retinue, constantly paying their Attendance on her, and regularly appearing or disappearing with her: So that unless a People are under her Influence and Direction, they can neither be great, happy, or wise.

And as the Practice of this Rule is conducive to the outward Prosperity of Mankind, so is it likewise to their inward Satisfaction and Peace. All the Pleasures and Enjoyments of Sense are of no Value in comparison with that Sweetness and Generosity of Temper, from whence flows the Practice of universal Justice. For whatever may happen, or how malicious Interpretations soever may be made of a Man's Actions, yet whilst he is sure he has been true to his own Conscience and this upright Principle, he is not only above the Malice and Follies of Men, but above the Fear and Suspicion of Mischief to befall him: Or if he chance to meet with ill Treatment from Men, he can easily bear it; because he is sure he has not deserv'd it. This placid Retreat into a Man's Self is the great, the only Asylum from Troubles abroad; and the Reflexion upon a Man's Integrity in this great Point, is the principal Consolation of human Life.

With this the good though afflicted Job comforted himself in Adversity: *I deliver'd, says he, the Poor that cried, and him that had none to help him. The Blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me; and I caused the Widow's Heart to sing for Joy. I put on Righteousness and it clothed me, and my Judgment was as a Robe and a Diadem. I was Eyes to the Blind, and Feet was I to the Lame.* In all which that good Man elegantly represents

sents the great Support it afforded him in his Adversity, to think that he had dealt mercifully by others in his Prosperity. In the same manner *Dávid* likewise comforts himself in his Troubles: *They rewarded me, says he, Evil for Good; but as for me when they were sick, my Clothing was Sackcloth, I behaved myself as if it had been my Friend or my Brother: And then appeals to God upon the same; Judge me, O Lord, according to thy Righteousness.*

On the other Side, what an Aggravation of our Trouble would it be should Adversity befall us, if we had Cause to make this bitter Reflexion: Thus and thus I deal with others in my Prosperity, and now it is come home to me. I had no Sense of Equality and Humanity towards others then, and I must now justly expect they'll have none towards me.

What Anguish must *Adonibezec* be under, when his Guilt extorted this sad Acknowledgment from him: *Threescore and ten Kings having their Thumbs and Toes cut off gather'd their Meat under my Table. As I have done, so God hath requited me.* And it must be a heavy Aggravation of *Haman's* Shame and Sufferings, that he must be hang'd on the same Gallows he had provided for the pious but brow-beaten *Mordecai*. And, to mention but one more Example of this kind, what Agony of Mind must *Joseph's* Brethren be in, when they

themselves came to be in Straits, and reflect on their former unnatural Dealing with their Brother? *We are verily guilty, cry'd they, concerning our Brother, in that we saw the Anguish of his Soul when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this Distress come upon us.*

Since then this Precept of our Saviour is so fundamental and necessary, so comprehensive a Rule of Life and Manners, and every way so conducive both to our outward Prosperity and inward Satisfaction; how inexcusable must those be, who, through the whole Conduct of their Lives, pay little or no Regard to it? Who lay down another Rule to themselves, of doing to others as they have been done by, instead of, as they would have been done by; or, what is still worse, treat others directly contrary to what they either have been, or wish to be treated by them: Who oppress and trample upon their Inferiors, revile their Betters, and defraud their Equals: Who carry on their lawless Passions without Restraint, to the Injury of their Neighbour's Property, Reputation, and Bed: Who meanly make themselves the only Center of all their Actions and Design, and regard nothing that is without them, any farther than as it may be serviceable to their own Interests and Enjoyments.

Do we profess ourselves to be the Disciples of the righteous *Jesus*; and can we really think ourselves to be what we profess, while we are continually breaking this Precept of his, on which the Morality of his Gospel, as well as the Law and the Prophets, depends? We may boast as much as we please, that we have all Knowledge and all Faith, that we speak with Tongues and understand Mysteries; but yet, if we do not govern our Lives by such moral Truths as this propounded in the Text, our Assent to revealed ones will be of little Service to us. Let us profess and believe as much as we will, unless *we deal by others as we would deal by ourselves*, all our Profession and Faith is in vain.

If therefore any of us have hitherto been remiss in complying with this Duty, and neglected to treat our Fellow-Creatures with that Righteousness and Humanity which they might justly expect from us; if we have not executed true Judgment between Man and Man, but have injur'd our Neighbour either in his Property or Fame; if we have spoiled the Poor by Violence, or kept back from the Debtor his Pledge; if we have withheld our Bread from the Hungry, or refused to clothe the Naked with a Garment, let us immediately reflect on the Baseness and Injustice of such Actions, and how different

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they are from what we would have done to ourselves. And if we have any Regard for Virtue or Religion, for the Happiness of Society, or our own true Interest and Satisfaction, for the Favour of Heaven in this Life, or the Reward of it in the next, let us labour to be just, merciful, and charitable to one another, and *do unto others whatsoever we would that they should do unto us.*





ON DOING GOOD.

ECCLESIASTES iii. 12.

I know that there is no Good in them, but for a Man to rejoice, and to do good in his Life.

THIS Book of *Ecclesiastes* gives us an Account of the several Experiments that *Solomon* had made, in order to the finding out wherein the Happiness of Man consists in this World. And these Words are one of the Conclusions he drew from those Experiments.

No Man had ever greater Opportunities of trying all the Ways, wherein Men generally seek for Contentment, than he had; and no Man did ever more industriously apply himself to, or took greater Liberty in, enjoying those good Things, that are commonly most admired, than he did: And yet, after all this Labour, and all his Enjoyments, he found nothing but Emptiness and Dissatisfaction.

He thought to become happy by Philosophy, giving his Heart, as he tells us, to seek and
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search out all the Things that come to pass under the Sun : Yet, upon Trial, he found all this to be Vanity and Vexation of Spirit.

He applied his Mind to Political Wisdom, and other Sorts of Knowledge ; and his Attainments in that kind were greater than of any that went before him : Yet he experienced at last, that in *Wisdom was much Grief ; and he that increaseth Knowledge increaseth Sorrow.*

He proved his Heart (as he tells us) with *Mirth and Wine*, and all sorts of sensual Indulgences and Pleasures, to find if these were good for the Sons of Men : And yet so far was he from his desired Satisfaction in these Things, that he (ver. 2.) was forced to say of Laughter, *that it was mad*, and of Mirth, *what Good doth it ?*

He turned himself to Works of Pomp and Magnificence : *he built him stately Palaces, and made him Gardens, Vineyards, Orchards, and Fountains. He increased his Possessions, and gathered Silver and Gold, and the precious Treasures of Kings, and of the Provinces.* He got him a vast Retinue, and kept the most splendid Court that ever any Prince of that Country did : Yet he tells us, *when he came to look upon all the Works, that his Hands had wrought, and on the Labour that he had laboured to do, behold all was Vanity and Vexation of Spirit, and there was no Profit under the Sun.*

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But wherein then is there any Profit, if not in these Things? What is that Good, that the Sons of Men are to apply themselves to, in order to their living as happily, as the State of Things here will allow? This Question he thus resolves in the Words of the Text, *I know (saith he) that there is no good in them, but for a Man to rejoice and to do good in his Life.* That is to say,

“ I have found by long Experience, that
“ all the Happiness that is to be found in
“ the good Things of this Life, ariseth from
“ these two Things, *rejoicing* in the Enjoy-
“ ment of 'em, and *doing good* to others
“ with them while we live.”

But in treating of these Words, I shall invert the Order in which they are put in the Text, and shall first speak of *doing good*, tho' it be named last: And shall afterwards shew what is here meant by *rejoicing*, for doing good is the Foundation of Joy. There can be no true Joy in the Possession or Use of any worldly Blessings, unless we can satisfy ourselves we have done some good with them. It is the doing good that sanctifies all our Enjoyments, and makes them Subjects of Satisfaction and Delight.

First, then, let me recommend to you the Practice of doing good upon several Considerations.

Secondly, I shall represent the Practicableness of it, by shewing the several Ways which every

every Person (though in the meanest Circumstances) is capable of doing good.

And lastly point out the *rejoycing* recommended in the Text.

The first Thing, then, is to recommend the Practice of *doing good* in our Life.

But so copious is my Theme, that I know not where to begin to speak, either of the Obligations that lie upon us, or of the Benefits and Advantages that accrue to us from this Virtue? Or having begun, where to make an End: The more we consider it, still the more and the weightier Arguments present themselves to us, to engage us in the Practice of it; and the more we practise it, still the more shall we desire so to do, and the more happy and joyous shall we find ourselves to be.

For *to do good* is nothing else but to act according to the Frame and Make of our Beings: It is to gratify those Inclinations and Appetites, that are most strongly rooted in our Natures; such as Love and natural Affection, Pity and Compassion; a Desire of Friends, and a Propensity to social Union. And what are all these, but so many *Stimuli*, so many powerful Incitements of Nature to put us upon doing good Offices to one another?

To do good, is the End of all those Acquisitions, of all those Talents, of all those Favours and Advantages that Heaven has blessed

us with, it is the proper Use we are to put them to. If we do not employ them this way, we are so far from being better for them, that they only prove a Snare and Delusion to us. What will signify our Wit and good Humour, our Strength of Reason and Memory, our Wisdom and Knowledge, our Skill in Arts, and Dexterity in Business, our Reputation and Interest in the World, our Wealth and Greatness? what will all these Endowments avail, if they do not render us more useful and beneficial to Mankind? That which sets the Price and Value upon every worldly Blessing, is the Opportunity it affords us of *doing Good* in the World.

To do good seems to be the Foundation of all the Laws of Nature, the supreme universal Law: It is that by which the World is supported, since without it all would presently fall into Confusion and Chaos. All the other natural Laws may be reduced to this, and are ultimately to be resolved into it. It is a Question, whether there be any natural Standard, whereby we can measure the Virtue or the Viciousness of any Action, but the Influence that it hath to promote or hinder the *doing Good*.

To do good, is the great Work for which we were sent into the World, and no Man lives farther to any Purpose than as he is an Instrument of *doing Good*. Be our Lives otherwise ever so busy and full of Action, yet

yet if others receive no Benefit by them, we cannot give ourselves any Account of our time; we have in effect lived idly, or to as little Purpose as the Sluggard; and very industriously done nothing at all.

To do good is that which of all other Services is most acceptable to Heaven: It is that which *Moses* and the Prophets make the Sum of the old Law; and *Christ* and his Apostles the Sum of the new.

And very great Reason there is for it; for *to do good* is to become most like to God. It is that which of all other Qualities gives us the greatest Resemblance of his Nature and Perfections, (*John* iv. 8.) for perfect Love and Goodness is the very Nature of God, and the Root of all his other Attributes: And there was never any Action done, any Work wrought by him, throughout the vast Tracts of infinite Space, from the Beginning of Time to this Moment, but was an Expression of his Love, and an Instance of *doing good*, and therefore, with the greatest Reason hath our blessed Lord told us, that the way to become Children of our heavenly Father is *to do good to all*, with the same Freedom and Unreservedness that God makes his Sun to shine upon the World.

But *to do good*, is not only our greatest Duty, but our greatest Interest and Advantage, which is that, that *Solomon* chiefly refers to in the Text. It is certain that no Man can
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take a more effectual Way to render his Being in the World happy and comfortable to himself (according to the ordinary Course and Event of Things) in what Condition or Circumstances soever he is placed, than *to do all the good he can* in this Life; so that tho' a Man who takes delight herein, seems only to respect the Good of other People, yet in the true Reckoning he most consults his own Profit and Emolument.

For to do good, is the natural Way to raise us Friends, who shall be obliged to contribute their Endeavours to the furthering our Pursuits; to the upholding and securing us in our Prosperity, and to the succouring and relieving us when Calamity surrounds us. Such is the Contrivance and the Constitution of this World, that no Man can subsist of himself, but stands in continual Need of others, both for their pleasurable Company and for their necessary Assistance. Now of all Men living, the good Man, who makes it his Business to oblige and befriend all about him, is most likely to be the best befriended and obliged.

To do good, is the truest Way to procure a Man's self a good Name and Reputation in the World; which as it is a thing desirable upon many Accounts, so is it a singular Advantage to a Man for the Promotion of his Interest. Nay *to do good*, is to embalm a Man's Name, and to transmit it with a grateful Odour to Posterity:

Posterity: *The Memory of a good Man shall be blessed.* Prov. xvi. 7. And the Sense of Mankind has always been, that too much Honour could not be given to those *that have done good in their Generation.*

Lastly, To conclude this Point *to do good* (besides all these Advantages that attend it) is most to consult our own Peace, and to make the best Provision possible for our Pleasure and Delight. Charity is really a Piece of Sensuality; and *Epicurus* himself the great Master of Voluptuousness, would confess that it was not only more brave, but more pleasant to do Kindnesses, than to receive them. And certainly every good Man will find it so, for as the exercise of Charity and Beneficence is as truly a Gratification of our natural Appetites and Inclinations, as any other Action or Thing that causes Pleasure to us, so it is also a Gratification of those Appetites which are the noblest and highest we have. Now by how much the Appetite that is gratified is more noble and divine, by so much must the Delight arising from the Gratification be more exquisite and God-like too. And which is farther to be consider'd, it is not with this Pleasure as it is with most others that vanish with the Enjoyment; nay often leave Bitterness and Melancholy upon the Mind. For *to do good* is a permanent Pleasure: It goes along with us both in this Life and the next: 'Tis turn'd as it were into the very Substance of
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the Soul, and is as immortal as the Will from whence it proceeds. Besides, in those whose Abilities are equal to their Intentions, as the actual Exercise of Humanity is the highest Pleasure a human Creature is capable of, so 'tis likewise the most shining Privilege and Distinction of Wealth and Fortune: 'Tis a Sign of Sufficiency, Superfluity, and Power, and includes a kind of Perfection in it: He that does great and generous Actions, looks like a full Being whose Abilities are not wholly exhausted upon itself, but like a swelling River, after it has filled its own Channel, overflows its Banks, and relieves the Barrenness of the neighbouring Ground. Now Power and Approach to Self-sufficiency is a very desirable Addition to any Being: Power is that great and active Attribute of God himself, which provides Satisfaction for the rest of his glorious Perfections. It implies likewise an honourable Trust at the same time, shews that they are Stewards and Almoners of Heaven, and are chosen out by the Almighty from the rest of Mankind, to dispense the Blessings of his Providence to the Needy, and to give his Household their Portion of Meat in due Season. This noble Employment looks like a Testimonial of our Worth from Heaven itself; as if it own'd our Sufficiency for the Discharge of this Office. Engaging ourselves in this Duty is likewise a fair Indication of a noble and virtuous Disposition: 'Tis a generous Exercise of Power,

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and shews we wish Mankind happy, by endeavouring to make them so. Now of all moral Excellencies Goodness is the most endearing: 'Tis the most valuable and charming Quality any Being can be possess'd of: 'Tis this glorious Perfection in the Deity himself, which renders the loving him with all our Hearts and all our Strength, so just and so reasonable a Duty; and makes it (as the Psalmist speaks) *a joyful Thing to be thankful.*

But enough has been said to convince any one of the Truth of Solomon's Proposition; that there is nothing better for a Man, nothing that more concerns him, either in point of Duty or Happiness, than *to do good in his Life.*

We come therefore, in the next Place, to demonstrate the Practicableness of this great Duty, by pointing out the several Ways by which every one, tho' in the lowest and meanest Condition, is capable of doing good.

There are many, that acknowledge it both their Duty and Interest to be *doing good* in their Lives, but complain of their want of Power and Opportunities to do it. But this is a very gross and mischievous Mistake. There is no Condition, or State of Life whatever, but what yields both Means and Opportunities for this Office: No one of whatever Circumstances or Situation in the World, but in his particular Sphere, by good Husbandry of the Talents intrusted to his Care, may prove Instruments of much Good and Benefit to his Fellow-Creatures.

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This Truth St. Paul very elegantly displays, where he compares the Society of Christians to a natural Body: There he shews, that as in the natural Body there are many Members, and all those Members have not the same Dignity and Honour, nor the same Use or Office, yet every one, even the meanest, is of real Service to the Body. *So that the Eye cannot say to the Hand (as our Apostle there expresses it) I have no need of thee: Nor again the Head to the Feet, I have no need of you.*

So is it likewise with the Body politick: There is a Necessity both in Church and State, that there should be a Variety of Functions, Degrees and Conditions: There must be some to govern, and some to be govern'd: There must be some more conspicuous, and some more obscure; some whose Gifts and Endowments lie this way, and some whose Talents lie in another way; and yet there is not one of these but in his Degree and Station, either is or may be as useful as any that belong to the Society.

To reduce the Apostle's Notion to its Particulars, or to shew in how many Respects every individual Person that is a Member of a Society is necessary to the Publick, and either doth, or may serve in the Weal of it, and so *do good* in his Life, is too great a Task to undertake at this Time; let it suffice at present to propose these general Heads.

First, None can want Opportunities of *doing good*, that is in a Capacity of performing any Acts of Mercy or Charity, strictly so call'd, whether that Charity be shew'd to the Bodies or Souls of Men. Now the Instances and Expressions of this way of *doing good* are infinite, as infinite are the Wants and Necessities of Mankind.

Secondly, All the Acts of Beneficence and Kindness, nay, even of Civility and Good-nature, are to be accounted among the Instances of *doing good*. A Man *doth good* not only by Acts of Charity, properly so call'd, but by every Courtesy that he doth to another: He *doth good* by shewing his Respect and Good-will to all about him, by reconciling Differences among Neighbours, and promoting Peace, Friendship, and Society as much as he can, by being generous, and liberal, and hospitable according to his Ability; by forgiving Injuries, and, if it be possible, making Friends of those that did them; by being easy of Access, and sweet and obliging in his Carriage; by complying with the Infirmities of those he converses with; and, in a word, by contributing any way to make the Lives of others more easy and comfortable to them.

Thirdly, A Man also *doth good*, when he makes use of that Acquaintance, or Friendship, or Interest he has with others; to prevail on them to the doing of that Good, which he cannot do by the Narrowness of his Condition, or his

want of Opportunity, cannot do himself. This is a very considerable and noble Instance of *doing good*. The Man who exercises himself this way is doubly a Benefactor; for he is not only an Instrument of Good to the Person for whom he intreated the Kindness, but he does also a real Kindness to the Man himself, whom he puts upon the Benefaction; for God will not less reward his Good-will for being excited by another. Such a one resembles his Saviour in a more particular Manner, being in some measure like him, a Mediator for the Good of Mankind.

Another Way *to do good* is when in a private Capacity we so carry ourselves in every Relation of Life, as the Nature of that Relation requires; whether as Governors or the Govern'd, Masters or Servants, Parents or Children, or as Friend to Friend.

And in the last Place, we may *do good*, and a great deal too, by our good Examples; by being eminent Patterns of every social and private Virtue.

And now these Things consider'd, who is there amongst us in such deplorable Circumstances that can either want Ability, or Opportunity of some way or other *doing good* in his Life-time?

Since, therefore, every one is so highly concern'd *to do Good* in his Life, let us henceforth seriously apply ourselves to it: Let this be the End of our gathering Riches, and the Mea-

sure of our expending them : Let this be the Compass we steer by in our Pursuit after Knowledge, in our Acquisition of Arts and Sciences, and in the Conduct of our several Professions and Employments. In a word, in the Choice and Prosecution of every Design we have in view, let this be the grand Enquiry at our first setting out, What Good will this tend to? How much more serviceable can I be in my Generation, if Success should happily attend my Pursuits; or what will the World be the better for my flourishing in it?

But further let us labour to do all the Good we can in our Life-time, and not leave it off till we come to die; and then think to atone for all our Sins, and Neglects of this Virtue, by being very charitable and bountiful at a Time when we find, to our Sorrow, we can keep our Pelf no longer. Let us be daily giving Evidence to the World of our publick and social Disposition, and not let that be the first, which we discover in our last Will.

So much for the first Point recommended in the Text, that *of doing Good*. Let us in the next Place just take notice of the other, that is to say, *Rejoicing*.

Now, the *Rejoicing* which *Solomon* obviously means here in the Text, is, in the first Place, a constant Habit of Joy and Chearfulness, so as to be always contented with our present Condition, and to be free from those

Anxieties

Anxieties, Disquiets, and ruffling Reflexions, which distract the Quiet of the Generality of Mankind; and to secure this Joy to ourselves, by the Innocency of our Lives, and the firm Persuasion of an almighty Providence attending us, the Measures of whose Dispensations are infinite Wisdom and infinite Goodness: So that nothing doth or ever can happen to us in particular, or the World in general, but what is the best either for us or it; however cross the present Event of Things may seem to fall out to our Desires and Expectations. And this is what the wise Man insinuates in the Verse before the Text: *God, says he, hath made every Thing beautiful in his Season.*

Secondly, By *rejoicing* our sacred Author here intends the free and comfortable Enjoyment of the good Things of this Life which God has blessed us with, in opposition to a penurious and avaricious Disposition. This is plain from the Verse following the Text, where he adds, by way of Application of what he meant by *rejoicing*, the following Words: *That every Man should eat and drink and enjoy the Good of all his Labours, for it is the Gift of God.* And surely for a Man to be well accommodated with the Goods of Fortune, and not to have a Spirit to make a generous Use of them; not to employ them for the Enjoyment both of Ourselves and our Friends; for our Refreshment under the Toil which the Changes and Chances of this Life exposes us

to; for promoting Acquaintance and Society, and rendring our Condition as easy as our Pilgrimage will admit of, is the highest and most unaccountable Folly we can be guilty of. But at the same time we must carry this Caution along with us: Not to exceed the proper Bounds of *rejoicing*; nor to run into Excess of any kind, but so to *use the World as not abusing it*.

And in the last Place, our chief and principal Act of *rejoicing* must be That *before the Lord*. Let us therefore return our due Praises and Thanksgivings to him, who is the Author of all we enjoy, and the Fountain of all we hope for. Let us make our humble Acknowledgments to him for all the good Things he has blessed us with, and submit chearfully to any Trial he has appointed for us. Thus shall we go thro' this World with double Joy and Tranquillity, and be infinitely bless'd in the next, in the Presence of God, where is the Fulness of all Joy and Pleasures for evermore.





On DOING GOOD, founded on GOSPEL
PRINCIPLES.

MATTHEW xix. 16.

Behold one came and said unto Jesus, Good Master, what good Thing shall I do that I may have eternal Life?

IT hath always been accounted, if not an Argument of Wisdom, yet a Sign of a promising Temper and a Capacity for the Attainment of it, to ask a prudent and pertinent Question; especially if there be so much Judgment, as to make choice of such a Person as is able to resolve it.

Both these Qualifications meet in the Man in my Text. For in the first place he neither comes with some Rabbinical Nicety, for the Ostentation of his own Learning and Subtilty; nor with a captious Interrogatory to intangle our Saviour in his Speech, but with a becoming Gravity and Sincerity to enquire about the great Affair of another World. And for his Satisfaction herein, he applies himself to him that came from Heaven on purpose to instruct Men in the Way thither, saying,
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Good Master, what good Things shall I do, that I may have eternal Life?

Now from the Question propounded by this Person under these Circumstances, we may make the following Observations, which greatly concern us all.

First, That the other World (or a Life after this) is a Matter of that great Moment and Importance, that no thinking Man can choose but be inquisitive about it.

Secondly, That he who seriously and ingenuously inquires into this Affair, will easily be resolved in the Affirmative, that these Things are so.

Thirdly, He that being satisfied that there is such a State as a Life hereafter, is destitute of common Sense, if he does not passionately desire to have a Share in it.

Lastly, He that desires an Interest in the World to come, is very absurd and unreasonable to hope for it, without *doing some good Thing* for the Attainment of it.

And first the Question about another World, or a Life to come, is of that Nature, that no thoughtful Man can avoid it, or choose but be solicitous about it: For it is certain we cannot so much as flatter ourselves into an Hope, that we shall live always here; and therefore it is obvious and natural for the Mind of Man to look beyond this short Stage, and to consider what shall become of him hereafter.

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Nor is this Solicitude about the future a meer Curiosity or Extravagancy of the Mind (as Atheistical Men would suggest to us) but very rational, as well as natural; For it is obvious to every Man to discourse after this Manner: How comes it to pass, that I have an understanding Mind, a Freedom of Choice, a Conscience reflecting upon my own Actions? Nay, whence is it? or to what Purpose, that I have some kind of Notion and Anticipation of another World, if there were no such Thing? and although it should be granted, that these Things amount not to a Demonstration, yet can it not be denied, but that they afford sufficient ground of Enquiry whether there be not such a thing; which is enough to the present Purpose.

Besides, the Consequence of this Business is so unspeakably great, as not only to recommend it to our Prudence and Caution, but to urge it upon our Consideration: For the Question is no less than this, whether I shall live for ever, or be for ever buried in Oblivion? Whether I shall shortly be, as if I had never been, and all my Thoughts perish with me? Or, Whether I shall survive the Ruins of my Body, and in another State reap the Fruit of my present Labours? Nay, that is not all; but whether I shall be crowned with Glory, in reward of the Good I have done here; or be tormented in another World, for my Miscarriages in this?

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These things concern a Man so deeply, that he must either have lost all the Principles of Reason, and all Sense of Humanity, or must do a mighty Violence to himself, that can abstract himself from these Considerations.

And it is further very observable, That this Question is not only of great Moment, with respect to the other World (when that time comes) but it is also of mighty Influence upon the Management of the present Life: Forasmuch as the Hinge of all our Elections and Prosecutions turns upon this Point.

As for Example, Whether a Man should be a Coward, and a Parasite, and flatter and humour every Body for Self-preservation? or whether he shall dare to act bravely for his Prince and Country, or any other excellent Purpose, out of a Sense of Honour and Gallantry?

Again, suppose a Man to be in Adversity, what Counsels shall he take, and how shall he behave himself? Whether shall he sullenly sit down in Desperation, and curse his Stars, or erect his Mind with Hope? It is certain, the former of these cannot be blameable, and the latter is ridiculous, if there be nothing to come hereafter.

In a word, Whether a Man shall suppress his Lusts, or stifle his Conscience? Whether he shall live like a Beast, in Expectation to die so, or live like a Man, in Hopes to live eternally? This and a thousand other Ques-

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tions can by no means admit of a Solution, unless that other great Case be first resolved, Whether there be a World to come, or no?

Therefore this discreet Person, in the Text, in the Prime of his Youth, and Flower of his Strength, and in the highest Tide of his Prosperity, had considered of it. It was not a Sick-bed Meditation; for he was in Health: nor a melancholy Qualm of old Age; for he was young: nor the Effect of his being discontented, and out of Humour with the World; for he was rich and prosperous: But it was the Effect of manly Sense and Wisdom; and so it will become every other Man. But so much for the first Point. I proceed to the second Proposition:

Whosoever seriously and ingenuously considers the Question about a World to come, or eternal Life, will easily be resolved in the Affirmative, *That there is such a State.*

I do not say, that there is such Evidence of this great Point, as there can be no Evasion; or that Men cannot disbelieve it, if they will.

But he that candidly and honestly applies his Mind to the Business, shall find it not easy to resist the Evidence for it.

Accordingly we find a great part of the Heathen World, by the meer Power of natural Reason, to have attained very good Convictions hereof; for they observed, that in all
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the Changes of Things, and in the various Revolutions of Matter and Body, not the least Atom of Matter was lost in the Universe; and hereupon they thought it very unreasonable to conceive, that Life and Mind should be extinguished.

Besides, they considered that human Souls were not only endued with Reason and Choice, and Conscience; but had (consequently thereupon) very clear Notions of certain moral Differences of Things, not as pleasant and hurtful only, but as good and evil upon higher Accounts. The Result of which Contemplation could not choose but put them under Expectations of some Account of their Choice and Actions hereafter; especially since they could not but be aware of the Obscurity of divine Providence in this World; and that there was no exact Distribution of Rewards and Punishments here according to Mens Demerits.

But whatever the Case be, as to natural Light, and whether that can give sufficient Security of another World or no, it matters not much now when we have divine Revelation; for whosoever looks into the Gospel, will find *Life and Immortality thereby brought to Light*, and *eternal Life* written, almost, upon every Page thereof.

And so to pass to my third Observation, That he who is persuaded, that there is such a thing as eternal Life really to be obtained, cannot

cannot choose but passionately desire to have a Share in it.

The Reason is plain and obvious, because eternal Life is so great a Good, that a Man must be supposed to hate himself, that can do otherwise than desire it.

Eternal Life is to be perpetually invigorated with the Power of the Almighty, and thence to feel a perpetual Spring of Life within himself; by means of which he is to all Ages fresh as the Morning, and durable as the very Heavens. Such a Person can be sensible of no Declension, Change or Interruption; he is placed out of the Sphere of Sickness, Pain, Death, or the least Suspicion of them.

He feels a constant Harmony in all his Powers, enjoys an uninterrupted Peace in his Conscience, and is always under the Light of the Almighty's Countenance.

Such an Estate as this is so unspeakable a Good, that we must desire it whether we will or no, if we believe it; insomuch that it cannot be so much as a Sign of Grace or Virtue to wish for it, because it is natural and necessary.

When the Multitude (which followed our Saviour only for the Loaves) began to forsake him, he turns to his Disciples, and saith to them, *Will ye also go away?* Lord (saith St. Peter) *whither shall we go? Thou hast the Words of eternal Life.* As if he had said, "If it were possible for us to be so destitute
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“ of all Grace and Gratitude, as not to adhere
 “ to thee for thy own Goodness and Excel-
 “ lency ; yet can we be so void of all Sense
 “ and Self-Love, as to forsake thee and eter-
 “ nal Life together ?”

By which it appears, that eternal Life is so infinitely desirable, that (as I have said) there is no Deliberation in the Case ; and therefore upon Supposition of the Belief of it, the only Thing in question is, what we must do for the Attainment of it ? Which brings me to my

Fourth and last Observation, *viz.* That he who is convinced that there is such a State as eternal Life, and desires a Share in it, cannot reasonably hope it but upon *doing good* for the Attainment of it. *Good Master, what good Thing shall I do, that I may have eternal Life ?*

This is the natural Sense of every Man's Mind, a Principle in our Consciences, not infused into us by Education or Instruction, but so engraven by the very Hand of God upon our Faculties, that no Art or Endeavour can efface it.

For what else is the Reason, that Men feel such Complacency in their Spirits, when they have done well and worthily ; that they are then erected with Hope, and kindly warmed in their Breasts with Peace and Joy ; that they can look up towards God with Delight, and towards Death without Consternation ?

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And on the other Side, What is the Cause that when Men are conscious to themselves to have done base and unworthy Actions, their Spirits are down, their very Countenance falls, and all Things look black and melancholy about them? What, I say, can be the Ground of this remarkable Diversity in Mens secret Sense, but the Force and Efficacy of that eternal Truth which God pronounced to Cain, but hath written upon every Man's Heart: *If thou dost well, shall thou not be accepted? But if thou dost evil, Sin lieth at thy Door.* So that there can be no doubt of the Proposition in general, that he that will hope to live for ever, and receive Good in another World, must *do good* in this. But the Meaning is not, that any one or more single Acts (how good and excellent soever) can qualify any Man for eternal Life; but an uniform Goodness, a divine Temper, an heavenly Conversation.

It was a Question, often and upon several Occasions propounded to our Saviour by the Jews; *Master, Which is the great Commandment of the Law?* And he as often referr'd those that ask'd him the Question, for Answer, not to any single Precept or Branch of the Law, but to such a Passage as contain'd a Summary or Epitome of the whole; namely, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Mind, and Soul, and Strength.*

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And in like manner he deals by this Person in the Text, telling him, ver. 17. *If thou wilt enter into Life, keep the Commandments.* q. d. It is not enough that thou observe any one Precept, but thou must make Conscience of them all. And the young Man himself seems to be aware of, and to have escaped, this common Error: For he replies, *All these have I kept from my Youth up. What lack I yet?* As if he had said, "I am very sensible, that without universal Obedience to the Laws of God I cannot approve myself to his Divine Majesty; and therefore I have endeavoured through the whole Course of my Life, conscientiously to discharge my whole Duty, so far as I understood it: But because I would not fail of that great Good which you have publish'd to the World; therefore my Enquiry further is, If there be not a Crisis in the Business, I mean, something that may be done more effectually to secure me of my Desires?"

To this our Saviour rejoins: Yes, *If thou wilt be perfect, sell all that thou hast, and give to the Poor, and thou shalt have Treasure in Heaven.* Not that our Saviour intended this for a standing Rule; or a necessary Condition of eternal Life; for we do not find that any where through the whole Gospel, he hath so universally and indispensibly propounded it: But his Meaning is, That such noble and generous Actions as this, wherever they are performed

in conjunction with an holy Life (as aforesaid) give mighty Proofs of Sincerity, are Arguments of an hearty Love to God, and consequently afford a Man the more comfortable Hopes of, and Pretensions to eternal Life.

So the Result of all is this, that the plain and beaten Way to Heaven is, to be habitually good and holy, and to make Conscience all along of every Commandment: But withal, because the Success is of infinite Importance, especially because we cannot but be conscious to ourselves, that we have in many things either through Ignorance, Surprisal, or Infirmary, failed of our strict Duty; therefore the wisest Way to secure so great a Stake, is not to content ourselves with an ordinary Diligence in performance of express Duties, much less with a passive Unblameableness; but generously resolve to do all the great Things we can, thereby to demonstrate both the Greatness of our Minds, and the Value and Sense we have of so inestimable an Happiness.

What remains then, but that in consideration of the Premises, we both reflect upon ourselves, and examine what Good we have already done, and what lies in our Power to do, that so we may enter into Life.

We cannot but be sensible, that our present Life wears away apace, Death making his daily Approaches towards us, and the great Concern of Eternity draws on: Therefore (as the wise Man advises) *whatsoever good Thing*

our Hand finds to do, let us do it with all our Might; this is the Time of Probation for another World; now we stand Candidates for Heaven, and now or never we must secure to ourselves eternal Life.

What would not most Men give for a Continuance of this present Life; which yet is little else but Care and Fear, Folly and Jealousy, Pain and Sickness, and at last ends in Death. Yet at what rate would Men be content to purchase (if it was but) *Hezekiah's* Lease of fifteen Years Addition to the usual Term of Living? But to live for ever, for ever! This is a Pearl of such Price, that a wise Merchant would give all that he hath to buy it.

Shall a little Ease, a little Pleasure, a little Money, tempt me to be content to be eternally lost? Shall Heaven and everlasting Blessedness seem dear to me at the Price of these?

No. Let us therefore as Men, and as wise Men, lay up for the future and purchase this great Reversion: As Men of great Sense and of great Minds, let us contrive with ourselves to do some good Things, and great too, great as our Capacities, and great as our Hopes.

Far be it from us that a few cheap Prayers, or some slight Alms, or a formal Profession of Christianity, or being zealous for a Party and Opinion, should be all we bid for Eternity.

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I shall not need to specify what great and good Things we should do in this Case, forasmuch as every Man's own Conscience and his peculiar Circumstances will best direct him herein; yet let me intimate that

To some of us the Providence of God hath given Leisure and Time and Retirement from Business; from these he expects they should spend that Time in devout Meditations and Prayer.

There are others, which the same divine Providence hath placed in a Crowd of Business; their Province is to be Examples of Prudence and Justice in the Management of it.

Some it is the Will of God should be low and poor in this World, and these shall do great Things by Patience, Contentment, and Resignation.

To others he hath given great Riches and plentiful Accommodations; their Duty is to be rich in good Works, that is, that they do Actions of Charity, Piety, and Beneficence, as great as their Fortunes; that their Hearts be as large as their Estates, and their Abundance be demonstrated by their accomplishing such good Works as others cannot undertake, rather than by indulging themselves in such Satisfaction as others cannot pretend to.

Some there are, who by the Advantage of an happy Temper, of a great Reputation, and of a peculiar Address, are capable of making

Peace and Agreement amongst Neighbours; and their Talent shews them their Duty.

Besides these, there are some Men whom God hath endued with great Parts and Abilities; from these he expects they should employ their Wit in the Cause of Virtue and Truth, against the rude Assaults of the Vicious and Profane.

To say no more, some are placed in Magistracy and Authority; these are called Gods, because they represent his Divine Majesty in the World: These are therefore to supply his Place, so as that by their Justice and Diligence there may appear to be a Providence in the World: Their peculiar Province is to hold up Government and Order amongst Men, to vindicate the Oppressed, to discountenance Profaneness and Debauchery, and to shed a Lustre upon Piety and Virtue.

In a word, as we may all do some Good, so let us not fail to do all the great and good Things we can, that so we may lay hold of eternal Life.





On the right Use of this World.

I CORINTHIANS vii. 31.

And they that use this World as not abusing it.

SO very numerous and thick-laid are the Temptations of the World, that wherever a Man sets his Foot he can hardly help treading upon a Gin or Snare; and so corrupt the very common Air, that to breathe is almost to draw in Infection. What Company can a Man go into from which he shall escape pure and undefiled? Men transfuse their Passions into their Discourses, and by them into their Hearers: They communicate their Vices at the same Time, and in the same Vehicles that they convey their Thoughts, infect one another, as other diseased Persons do, by their Breath.

Upon Consideration of these Things; some have thought it necessary to retire, and not content with renouncing the Poms and Vanities of the World in their Vow of Baptism, have added to it another, that of renouncing the World itself. But the Apostle here proposes another Expedient, which is, by separating

rating the Effect from the Cause. For as bad as the World is, there is no Necessity either of *not using* it, or of *abusing* it; since the Abuse may be separated from the Use, and we may use the World without abusing it, as intimated in the Words of the Text: *And they that use this World as not abusing it.* Which Words I shall further enlarge upon, by endeavouring to shew,

First, What it is to abuse the World.

Secondly, Upon what Account it concerns us to beware of so doing.

Now there are two general Ways of abusing the World.

First, By making it an End.

Secondly, By using it as a Means to a wrong End.

First, By making it an *End*. St. *Austin* has long since resolved all Immorality into these two fundamental Disorders: *The enjoying what we should use, and the using what we should enjoy.* And thus it is, when we make the World an *End*; for then we make That an *End* which is no more than a *Means*, and *enjoy* That which ought only to be *used*. For the World is not *our* End, whatever it may be to Creatures below us. We were not made for its Enjoyments, nor can we be ever truly, or so much as in our own Opinion, happy in them. I say, in our own Opinion: For indeed Men are ready enough to think one another happy, and to envy one another upon that Occasion; but
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scarce ever any one thought himself so. 'Tis true indeed they think they shall be so, and after the Disappointments and Abuses of one Pleasure, live on in Expectation of being more kindly serv'd by another; supporting themselves by their Variety among their thin, Entertainments, as the sinking Bird holds up her Weight by renewing her Strokes in the yielding Air. We may amuse ourselves a while with Dreams and Fancies, but there is a Thirst in the Soul of Man, which all the little Cisterns of the Creation can never quench; an Emptiness which they can never fill: God only can do that, and therefore he only is our End. He has made us for himself, and accordingly has given us Desires which none but himself can ever satisfy. And therefore if we make the World our End, 'tis plain that we set the Creature in the Place of God, are guilty of the highest Idolatry, transgress the Laws of Truth, Order and Reason, deceive ourselves, and *abuse* the World.

Secondly, We abuse it by using it as a Means to a wrong End.

The End for which the World ought to be used can be no other than that for which it was made: And if we would know what That was, we need only consider who it was that made it, since it is impossible that God, whose Perfections are infinite, should act for any other End than Himself; who is therefore the final as well as the efficient Cause of all his Works.

Works. And so the Scripture represents it; *The Lord hath made all Things for himself*, says the wise Man. To which agrees that of St. Paul, *All Things were created by him, and for him*. Since then all things are made for God, who is the End as well as the Founder of the Creation, 'tis plain, that all things ought to be refer'd to him; and consequently, that if we would make a right use of the World, we must use it for God and for his Glory.

And herein is likewise comprehended the Good and Welfare of human Society; it being for the Glory of God that his Creatures, whom he made for supreme Happiness, even the Enjoyment of himself, should be as Prosperous and happy as may be, both in this Life and in the next. So then we are to use the World for the Honour and Glory of God, and for the true Interest and Welfare of Society, and accordingly not to use it for these, or for contrary Ends, is to *abuse* it; as they do,

First, who instead of employing that Power, Interest, Authority, Station, Wealth or Grandeur which they have in the World for the Encouragement of true Religion and Virtue, use all these for contrary Purposes, to encourage Vice or Vicious Principles, to pervert Men from a right Religion, or to debauch them in it. This is to arm the Creatures against the Creator; to fight against God with his own Forces, to use the World directly to the

the Dishonour of him that made it, and consequently is a gross Abuse both of his Kindness and of his Gifts. Which they are guilty of, who,

Secondly, use the good Things of the World, the Productions of Nature, the Fruits of the Earth, or any of God's Creatures in such a manner or degree as tends to their own Prejudice. For the Creatures were design'd for our good; and therefore to use them for our hurt, is to pervert the intended Use of them, that is, to *abuse* them.

Now we may use them to our Hurt two ways, either to the Hurt of our Souls, or to the Hurt of our Bodies.—To the Hurt of our Souls; when we gratify ourselves in a lesser Pleasure, at the Expence of a greater; and by an Over-indulgence in the lower Goods of the Animal Life, unfit ourselves for higher and more rational Enjoyments.—To the Hurt of our Bodies; when we use any of God's Creatures in such a Degree, as to untune the natural Harmony of our Constitution; and so prejudice our Health. And in this consists the Formality of that Vice, which we call *Intemperance*.

To give an Instance of this: Wine is a noble Production of Nature, and an excellent Gift of God, intended (as the Psalmist speaks) *to make glad the Heart of Man*, to cheer his sinking Spirits when oppressed with either Sickness, Melancholy, or worldly Trouble,
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and to excite him when thus revived to praise the bountiful Author of so rich a Blessing. And so far 'tis well, and as it should be. But when Men shall drink till they forget themselves as well as their Troubles, and exchange their Melancholy for Madness; when they shall make themselves sick with that which should comfort them: This is a most shameful, and a most ungrateful Return to God for his Blessings, and such an intolerable Abuse of his Creatures, as deserves not to have the Power of Repetition.

Again, Thirdly, they may be justly said to abuse the World, who employ it only to their own Use, and do no good with it: Who, contrary to the Admonition of the Psalmist, *When Riches increase, set their Hearts upon them*; who when they had little of the World were free and generous, kind-hearted and open-handed, but grow close and stingy, as the World thrives upon them, and they gather and swell in Substance! And the more so, as they grow in Years: For then the World has a double Hold of them, and they are by a second Engagement devoted to it. Then 'tis, that they begin truly to understand the Worth of Money, and the Art of keeping it. Then 'tis they retrench their Expences, and withdraw their wonted Charities, live more within themselves and are less communicative to others; and, like the setting Sun, as it grows larger and nearer its End,
give

give less and less Light and Warmth to the World.

- And this, thro' a mistaken Notion, that what they legally possess is so much their own, and that they are such absolute Masters of it, that they may dispose of it as they please. But there is nothing in this World so much our own, as that we should have an absolute and unlimited Dominion over it. He that made the World has alone such a Degree of Propriety in it. As for the Possessors, they are but as the Stewards of God, who has only committed to them the good Things of the World as a Trust, and will hereafter require of them an Account, how they have managed it. So that a great Estate is only a great Trust, a Charge, a Talent, to be laid out for our Master's Use, that is, for the Interest and Advantage of our Brethren. And therefore they that do not make that use of it, but bestow it wholly upon themselves in a way of private Indulgence, are false to their Trust (how true soever they may be in their Dealings) and unfaithful to their Master, and *abuse* as much of the World, as they thus mis-employ.

But if to employ the World to our own private Use only, be to abuse it, what shall we say of those miserable Wretches who neither spend it upon themselves nor upon others, but hoard it up in Bags and Chests, till their Garments are moth-eaten, and their
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Gold and Silver canker'd ? Why, certainly these Men would ingross the Beams of the Sun, seal up the Fountain of Light, and inclose the common Air if they could. For they do so by as much of the World as they can. But sure there cannot be a grosser Abuse of the World than this, thus to frustrate the Bounty of Nature, to stop the Circulation of her Blessings, and render her richest Fruits idle and insignificant. And if those that spend their Wealth in Riot and Luxury, may be said with the unjust Steward, *to waste their Masters Goods* ; these may be properly, even literally said, with the unprofitable Servant, *to bury their Talent in the Earth*, and may justly with him expect *to be cast into outer Darknes*.

And thus you see, what it is to abuse the World, and who they are that do it : and from hence we may gather what it is to make a right use of the World, and who they are, *who so use the World as not to abuse it*. They are they, who do not make the World their *End*, the boundary of their Desires, and the stay of their Minds ; no nor yet love and adhere to it, as the true and real Good of their Souls, but use it only as a means in order to that which is so ; not affecting, or desiring it for itself, but only using, and serving themselves of it, for their Conveniency and Accommodation ; in one word, that do not *enjoy*, but only *use* the World ; and that use

use it also to right and good Ends, such as, the Glory of God, the Interest of Religion, their own Good, and the Good of their Brethren: That passing through the World, like hasty Travellers, are moderate and temperate in the use of the Creatures, neither disturbing their Bodies by them, nor injuring their Minds, either by disordering their intellectual Faculties, or by unfitting them for higher, while they gratify them with lower Enjoyments: That neither hoard up the good Things of the World, nor yet employ them wholly to their own private use, but communicate and do good with them, according to the Measure that they have of them, and so purchase Heaven by parting with a little Earth. This is to make a right use of the World, to use it according to its Worth, and according to the End designed; and the contrary to this is to abuse it. I come now briefly to shew,

Secondly, Upon what Account it concerns us to beware of such Abuse; and among many other, there are two very sensible and persuasive Reasons for it, the first of which may be taken from the Shortness and Transitoriness, the second from the Inconstancy and Instability of all worldly Things. And they are both of them intimated by the Apostle in the Context. The first, when he says, *The Time is short*: The second, when he says, *The Fashion of this World passeth away*. And

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First, *The Time is short*; both that of the World, and that of those who dwell therein. The World, as fixed, and as well-built as it seems for Age, and which the Heathen Philosophy thought eternal, must and shall come to an End. *The Time*, it seems, *was short* in the Apostle's Days, which, accordingly in Scripture, are often called *the last*; but it is much shorter now, since so many Revolutions of the Sun are gone over our Heads. And if Time itself be so short, what is the Time of Man? If the whole Circumstance be so narrow, what is that little Arch of the Circle which makes up the Measure of our Vanity? What is it, I will not say to Eternity, but even to the World's Duration? And if Time itself be but a swift River that quickly passes, sure we Mortals are but as the Bubbles in it, that hastily rise up and sink down one after another in our Turns.

'Tis indeed but a little while since we came into the World, and in all likelihood much less that most of us have to continue in it; and when a few more Suns have risen and gone down upon us we must all die, and no longer enjoy the Light of the Heavens, nor the Fruits of the Earth, but take up our cold Lodging in one of its dark little Cells, and leave the rest of it, for as little a while, to other Tenants. In the mean time we must go and give an Account of our Stewardship, and be favourably or severely dealt with in
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the other World according as we have used this.

But now if our Stay in this World be so short, and our Reckoning so near; does not this preach to us a Lecture of Moderation in the use of the Creatures, and very loudly caution us against the Abuse of them? For is it Wisdom to cleave to those things so immoderately, which we must part with so quickly; to set our Hearts upon a World, where we are only to take a Turn or two; to lay out so many Hours upon our Pleasures and Diversions, when we have but so few for our Work; to spend our Morning in Luxury, when our whole Day is so short; to misuse any part of our Time when we have but so little in all; or to abuse the Creatures in any way of Intemperance, when we must so shortly answer for such Abuse? And after all is it worth while to run the Hazard of being miserable everlastingly for such short transient Indulgencies, which moulder away under our Hands, and even perish in the very using?

Secondly, *The Fashion of this World passeth away.* 'Tis not only to last for a short time, but, even while it does last, is liable to many Uncertainties, and suffers many Changes. The Scenes of this great Theatre are always shifting and turning, and the Stage is never long without a new Figure. There are great Diversities of them, and the Time for Action

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short, and therefore the Succession must be quick, that so they may all take their Turns. The present Scene therefore never holds very long, but passes away, and another Figure appears, so that there is nothing fixed and steady. New Revolutions in Empires and Kingdoms, new Alterations in Families, new Accidents to particular Persons, no State or Condition of Life secure from Changes and Chances. Is this then a World to be fond of, or to riot and revel in? Or dare we make an ill Use of the good Things of the World, when it is so uncertain how long we shall have even the very Use of them? Dare we abuse our Power to Insolence, or our Greatness to Oppression, or our Wealth to Luxury, or our Health to Intemperance, or our Wit and Parts to Profaneness, when 'tis so very uncertain at what Time we shall be deprived of any, or all of these Things? For they are all but Scenes, and those continually passing. It concerns us therefore to live rather in a constant Awe among so many Changes and Chances, and to use great Reserve and Moderation in our Commerce with the Creatures, still fearing the next Scene, lest it should be that of a Punishment for our Abuse of the former.

Let therefore the Consideration of the Shortness and Instability of this present World so govern us in the Use of all its little vanishing Goods,

Goods, that we may neither abuse them, nor ourselves by them, but be so moderate even in the most allow'd Enjoyments of the Creatures that they may neither prove a Snare to us here, nor rise up in Judgment against us hereafter. And I pray God, that we may so pass through things Temporal, that we finally lose not the Things Eternal. *Amen.*



On the proper Objects of our Affections.

COLOSSIANS iii. 2.

*Set your Affection on Things above, not on
Things on the Earth.*

THE separate Interests of this World and the next, make Man a very fickle Being. As he is compounded of two different Principles, one of them devoted to the Concerns of this World, the other looking forward to Eternity, it is no Wonder to see him varying in his Purposes, as this or that Principle has the Ascendant. There are some indeed so steadily religious, and others so profligate and abandon'd, that they seem to have but one Principle to direct them. But the greatest Part of us are wavering and irresolute ; sometimes misled by the Blandishments of Sense, and at other times reclaim'd by Reason : So that our Lives are chequer'd with Vice and Virtue, and divided between Sin and Repentance.

Now the Cause of this disorderly Variety in our Actions, is evident by the misplacing of our Affections: If we would but suffer them to be conducted by Reason, we should never
feel

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feel such a Conflict within ourselves from the Remonstrances of that busy Motion: We should be secured from all Levity and Error, and consequently from all Sorrow and Disappointment: We should be taught not to look for substantial Happiness where no substantial Happiness can be found; or, in other Words, we should be taught, as we are taught in my Text, to *set our Affections on Things above, not on Things on the Earth.*

Reason, I say, could she spake for herself, would give us the very same Advice as the Apostle; and 'tis pity therefore that such excellent Advice should meet with such ill Reception: But as the sensual Man doth *not well consider it*, so the superstitious doth *not understand it*: Neither of them obeys the Precept as he ought, tho' the former offends knowingly and wilfully, and the latter thro' Ignorance and Mistake: One of them receives the Precept like a stubborn Enemy, and the other like a ceremonious Friend: And accordingly the one treats it with Contempt and Aversion, the other with too much Respect. To be plain, the sensual Man refuses to comply with the Command, lest it should rob him of his *unlawful* Pleasures; and the superstitious adheres so strictly to the Letter of it, that he loses even those Pleasures that are lawful: Whereas, were the Design of the Apostle understood, the Libertine might have the truest Satisfaction that this World affords, without
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deserting the Interests of the next; and the Devotee might have all the spiritual Ecstasy he desires, without sequestering himself from his Pleasures or his Business. In a word, the latter might be convinc'd, as great a Paradox as it seems, that a Christian may be a Man of Pleasure; and the former persuaded of what is as great a Paradox to *him*, that there is no Man of Pleasure like the Christian.

Now all this will most evidently appear, by considering the three following Propositions.

I. First, That whatever is meant by the Precept of the Apostle or any other of the same *Nature*, in holy Writ, it can never be understood to prohibit that Attention to the Concerns of this World which is necessary to our well-being in it.

II. Nor Secondly, can it be supposed to exclude from the Enjoyment of those innocent Delights which Nature has poured out about us.

III. But Thirdly and Lastly, That so far as is consistent with the necessary Business and innocent Delights of Life, it is no less our Intent than our Duty to *set our Affections on Things above.*

First, I say, That whatever is meant by the Precept of the Apostle, or any other of the same *Nature* in holy Writ, it can never be understood to prohibit that Attention to the Concerns of this present World which is necessary for our well-being in it. To provide
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for our own Security is indeed as much requir'd of us as any other Act of Duty. Self-Preservation is a moral Principle, and as such we are oblig'd to comply with it. Luxury and Intemperance, and all that Tribe of Vices by which we are said to sin against ourselves, are none of them any otherwise criminal than as they offend against this inviolable Law: For the same Reason all Neglects and Omissions, by which we are wanting to our own Security, are, in proportion to their Importance, Sins. Besides this, there are many other Duties arising from the several Relations we stand in, none of which can be practis'd as they ought, without an Attention to the Business of the World. So that to abandon the Society of Men, and immure ourselves in Cells or Cloisters, as it is taught and practis'd in the Popish Countries, under pretence of setting our Affections on Things above, is so far from being the Duty of a Christian, that, as long as the Health of our Minds and Strength of our Bodies enable us to be useful in another Way, it is downright Desertion of our Duty; a devout Lethargy, agreeable neither to Grace or Nature. A chearful and regular Obedience in the more active Scenes of Life, is a much juster Sanctity; as the Good of Mankind is a nobler View than one's own particular Interest or Advantage.

But, Secondly, as this Precept of the Apostle is not meant to prohibit all Attention to

the Business of the World, so neither can it be supposed to exclude us from the Enjoyment of the innocent Delights which Nature has poured out about us.

It cannot be denied, that at some certain Seasons, to mortify our corrupt Affections, or to humble ourselves before an offended God, it may be proper to abstain from the Enjoyment of our lawful Pleasures. But it is a mean and unworthy Notion of the supreme Being, to suppose He delights in Misery. The contrary is not only deducible from his Attributes, but so visible even in all his Works, that nothing but the groundless Terrors of the superstitious, who thought him *altogether such an one as themselves*, could have induc'd them to entertain such a Thought. *The merciful and gracious Lord hath so done his marvellous Works, that they ought to be had in Remembrance.* And how can they be remembered better than by contemplating them with Pleasure and Complacency? It must needs be Guilt or Ignorance that can cause us to survey the Beauties of the Creation without being sensibly affected. They were made to strike our Senses with Delight, and if they have not this Effect, the Design of Nature is defeated. It is for this Reason they are ever tempting and soliciting us, and till we can divest ourselves of all our Senses which were purposely adapted for the Enjoyment of them, we cannot be indifferent or inattentive. And indeed to behold them

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them with a chearful Heart, is in some sort an Act of Gratitude: 'Tis rejoicing in him *who made them*, as we cannot but do with the most unfeign'd Sincerity, when we consider him as their great Author and Support. Who can enumerate that Variety of Entertainments that lie scatter'd about the visible Creation? But sure it must needs be a more religious as well as more happy Temper, to be pleas'd as much as possible with every Thing. This is certainly no ways inconsistent with the hardest and severest Principles of the Gospel: We are commanded indeed *to take up our Cross*; but we are no where commanded to seek it out: We are to bear all the Calamities that fall to our Share, but not to load ourselves with unnecessary Evils: We are neither to decline or court Adversity; but if it is thrown into our Lap we must bear it patiently: If not, we may enjoy the Blessings of Providence, provided it be done with Temper and Moderation, with an humble Sense of our own Unworthiness, *and without forgetting the Hand that gave them.*

And this leads me to consider, Thirdly, That so far as is consistent with the necessary Business and innocent Delights of Life, it is no less our Interest than our Duty *to set our Affections on Things above.* And sure if any thing in this World deserves our Love, much more doth the most bounteous Author of every thing that is good and amiable. He gave us not only those Objects which affect *us* with such an exquisite

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exquisite Pleasure, but likewise the very Capacity of receiving that Pleasure, and the Disposition of being delighted with it. He therefore should be *the Principal, if not sole Object of our Affection*; and because the Passions are apt to follow which way soever the Senses lead them, and consequently 'tis not so easy to place our Affections upon a spiritual and incorporeal Being, as upon one of the same Nature as ourselves; It would be well, therefore, if we would endeavour to bring down this glorious Object to the level of our own Capacities, or at least to raise ourselves to some Idea of his infinite Perfections, by surveying him with the Eye of Reason. By this Means we shall discover how much we have been oblig'd to his Goodness, and how much we depend upon his Power; how much Reason we have to praise him for Favours past, and to trust in him for those which are to come. Love and Joy, and Hope and Gratitude, and all the Tribe of the most exalted Passions which can rise in the Heart of Man, will find Room to exalt themselves on this single Object. How must the Imagination swell with the Idea of that great and awful Being, which *even the Heavens of Heavens is not able to contain!* And how must it break out into Ecstasies of Thanksgiving, when we consider ourselves intitled by the Blood of our Redeemer *to an Inheritance uncorruptible and undefiled, reserv'd in those Heavens for us!*

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But another Reason why we should set our Affection on Things above, is, that we may be superior to the little Casualties and Disasters that happen in this lower World. A Mind that is wholly bent upon Immortality, contracts all its Views and Wishes with respect to this transient Scene into a very narrow Compass. Fortune has no Power over it. Every Moment of *Pleasure* is enjoy'd, and every Moment of *Pain* is cheated away by the Prospect of a blessed Immortality. From a Heart so fortified as this, came that noble Resolution in the Prophet *Habakkuk*: *Altho' the Fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall Fruit be in the Vines, the Labour of the Olives shall fail, neither shall the Fields yield any Meat; the Flock shall be cut off from the Fold, and there shall be no Herds in the Stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my Salvation.*

Such is the Spirit of every true Christian when he is *tried* in the Furnace of Affliction. The setting our Affections on Things above, causes all Difficulties and Hardships to disappear. The Love of God is the vital Principle which animates and gives Vigour to our Devotion: Without this, the outward Exercise of Religion will be not only a fruitless and unprofitable, but a very toilsome and uneasy Task. We see in the ordinary Concerns of Life, how the Principle of Love prevails. With how much Ease are all Difficulties surmounted which oppose the Passage to what we earnestly desire!

desire! Who would not risk even Life itself for the sake of what he dearly loves? And on the contrary, how ill are all Offices perform'd that are undertaken at first with Compulsion, and executed with Unwillingness and Regret! In vain does Reason prompt us forward, if our Affections do not second and support it; and if they *do*, no Danger can discourage us, no Opinion baffle our Endeavours.

But lastly, Another Reason why we should set our Affections on Things above, is, that there is nothing here on Earth which we can set them upon so fixt, certain, and faithful to us. Nothing else we value can be so relied upon: For whether it be Friends they shall fail; whether it be Pleasure it shall cease; whether it be Riches they shall vanish away; and even while we keep them, there are Times and Seasons when they can do no real Service, and that too when we stand most in need of them. If we set our Affections therefore entirely on the Things of this World, how vain, how fleeting, and how inconstant Things do we place our Felicity in? And yet alas! we are anxious to continue here even at that Time, when the rest of our Days are but Labour and Sorrow. This Affection grows upon us in the Decline of Life, when one would think the very Infirmities of our Nature should incline us to take Refuge in the Grave. And now what an abject State of Mind is it thus to linger upon the Brink of a Precipice, when we
are

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are sure we must take the Leap at last. It is a fine Réflexion we meet with in a Fragment of one of the *Greek Poets*, *That he is the happiest Man who after having survey'd the Wonders of Nature retires soonest to the Place from whence he came.* Life has no farther Entertainments, even for the wise and the good, much less for those who spend it in a Circle of Vice and Folly. Happiness, therefore, of human Life, consists not in what we enjoy in it, or how long we continue in it, but in what we do, and the Virtues we practise in it. He that so divides his Time betwixt this World and the next, as not to be wanting to the Concerns of either, has no more to desire than a little Time to make Peace with Heaven, to recollect the scatter'd Powers and Capacities of his Soul, and to arm himself with Strength and Courage to meet Death. And what but Religion can enable a Man to do this? What else dispose him with an undaunted Heart, to deliver himself up to the King of Terrors, to be transported by him to the great World of Spirits, which are waiting for their final Doom? Religion will do this, and ever after Religion will be our Pleasure and Delight: It will be our chief Happiness in the other World as it is our chief Interest in this.

Thus we see in what Sense it is said of Religion that *it shall not be taken away from us:* It shall never fail us; it shall not, like those
which

which are called worldly Goods, be remov'd from us by any Accident or Disaster: It does not depend upon any Change of Fortune; nor is it liable to be impair'd by Age: It cannot *be corrupted by Moth or Rust, nor can Thieves break through and steal it*: There are no Circumstances that can destroy the Use of it: When other Comforts are most apt to fail us, it is then in its greatest Vigour: It rises in proportion to our Exigencies and Wants, and the more afflicted and forsaken we are by the World, the more ready it is to receive and cheer us: In all Circumstances and Conditions, in Sickness and in Health, in Prosperity and Distress, it is our safest Guide, our best Companion, our truest Friend, our only Security from the Fear of Death, and when Death comes our only Comfort and Support: Nay, it will follow us to the Grave, it will rise with us at the Day of Judgment, recommend us to the Favour and Mercy of our Judge, and ascend with us to a State of Glory.





On walking by Faith, not by Sight.

2 CORINTHIANS V. 7.

We walk by Faith, not by Sight.

THE Meaning of the Apostle in this Passage seems plainly to be this, We live and regulate our Conduct, not by what we see in this World, but by what we believe and expect in the next, expressing hereby his Willingness to quit this State of Mortality upon Earth, upon the Confidence of exchanging it for a better in Heaven. Therefore, says he, in the Verse before the Text, *We are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the Body, we are absent from the Lord.* In treating of this Subject therefore, we have nothing more to do than to shew that it is the Duty of every Christian, as it was the Practice of St. Paul, to govern and Order his Life and Conversation, not by what he sees in this World, but by what he believes and expects in the next.

And so much the more necessary is it to inculcate this Doctrine, as the general Way of the World is quite opposite to this Apostolical Maxim,

Maxim, indeed the very Reverse of it. Instead of *walking by Faith, not by Sight*, their Way is to walk by Sight, and not by Faith: Sensible Objects are with them the only Realities, and 'tis by the Impressions of these that they govern not only their Lives and Actions, but even their Opinions and Sentiments. And though some few noble and generous Spirits, by the help of free Meditation and recollected Reflexion, may at length, with no ordinary Difficulty, have rescued their Understandings from this long-settled Usurpation, yet such is the Infirmary of Human Nature, that all Men more or less live by Sense; though some few perhaps, I say, think and reason above it.

But this, which is the Alloy and Mixture of all Spirits, makes up the whole Temper and moral Constitution of some. There are Men (if I do not mis-call them by that Name) whose whole Measure, whose whole Conduct, whose whole Life and Conversation, whose whole Heart and Affection is nothing else but Sense, and who *walk as much by it*, as those Creatures do which have no higher Principle. They will believe nothing but what they are inform'd of by their Senses, and for that Reason they will not allow God, Angels, Spirits, or so much as their own Souls, a Place in their Creed; because they see none of these Things. And as they believe nothing but sensible Beings, so they can neither love, taste, or enjoy any thing but sensible Good. To tell them
of

of the Pleasures of Reason, such as thoughtful Souls enjoy in the Contemplation and Discovery of Truth, or virtuous ones in the due Use and Management of their moral Powers, is to set Colours before a blind Eye; they have neither Notion, nor Relish of the Matter. Futurities weigh but little with them, though within the Verge of this World, but to tell them of a glorious Reversion in another, were, instead of exciting their Faith, only to expose your own Credulity. They either cannot see to such a Distance, or the Object appears so little, so faint, and so obscure, that they are no more mov'd at it than at one of the feeble, doubtful Lights of the *Milky Way*; when, in the mean while, every little, trifling Pleasure or Interest of this present World, is to them like the Sun at Noon, that not only lights but warms them too, puts a new Motion into their Blood and Spirits, and quickens them with the Life of Spring. This material, visible, sensible, palpable, and (to speak all at once) this present World is the World they are fond of and wholly solicitous for; they love it with Dearness, speak of it with Passion, enjoy it with Greediness, and leave it with Sorrow; and whatever glorious Things are spoken of the City of God above, this is the Place where they could be content for ever to take up their rest, and spend their Immortality. Being to the full as much dead and crucified to the other World, as the mortified

St. Paul was to this. *Thus walking altogether by Sight, and not by Faith.*

These are they whom the Psalmist calls *Men of the World, who have their Portion in this Life*; and whom our Saviour sets forth by the significant Title of *Children of this World*: And I fear these Children of the World make the greatest Part of it, and some of them the greatest Figure in it. For if we go to the Courts of Princes, what is there there, but what flatters and entertains the Sense? And what are the Lives of all great Persons, but continued Scenes of pompous Tumult; Noise and Shew, one great sensible Amusement? If from these we come down to those of low Rank and Education, we shall find them yet deeper plunged (though not so richly set) in the sensible Life, totally immersed in the little Concernments of this World.

But though this be too much the Practice, the quite contrary is the true Rule and Duty of Christians, *to walk by Faith, not by Sight*; to govern their Lives, not by what they see in this World, but by what they believe and expect in the next; and that for several important Reasons.

First, Because, besides the Sin and the Misery, the Weakness and the Folly, and the many ill Examples and corrupt Principles which every where abound, they can see nothing in this World but what is vain and unsatisfying.

satisfying. The World indeed promises great Things to its Lovers and Votaries; and truly to see Men so eager and warm in the Pursuit of its Interests and Enjoyments, pitying those that want them, and envying those who have them, one would be tempted to think there were really something in them. But the wisest and the greatest Enquirer found just nothing, but this, that all is Vanity.

But were there no Experience in the Case, Reason alone would satisfy as many as would consult her, of the utter Vanity of all sensible and worldly Objects. For how is it possible that a Soul, made capable of enjoying an infinite Good, should find compleat Satisfaction in any Creature? What Proportion is there between such an Object and such a Capacity! And how then can one fill the other? But now if all these Things that the World can present to our Senses be but so many gilded Vanities, (as even Sense itself can witness that they are) then 'tis plain that they cannot be our End; and if they cannot be our End, then 'tis as plain they ought not to be our Measure. We ought not therefore to govern our Lives by what we see here, nor reckon that good or evil, profitable or prejudicial to us, which is so at present and in a worldly Respect; but we ought to have our Eye upon the other World, and reckon that only Good which serves to make us happy there, and that only Evil which serves to make us miserable there,

where the Happiness and the Misery are both at the Height.

Secondly, Because the Things that we see here are not only internally vain and deficient in their Natures, but also transient and momentary in their Duration. This is the Character of all sensible Objects, nay even of our Senses themselves, that they are but for a Time; and *that Time*, the Apostle tells us too, *is short*. Our Bodies are built but for a little while, and our Senses oftentimes do not last so long, as if unwilling to stay to be Witnesses to the Ruins of their falling Tenements. But which soever gets to the Goal first, 'tis certain, that they both hasten to Ruin as fast as they can, always wasting and mouldring away from us; and the World without us will not be long behind us, since the *Fashion of it is continually passing away*, always changing and shifting its Scenes, and rolling on as fast as the Wheels of the Sun, or the Wings of Time can carry it to its great Doom and final Dissolution. In short, all Things here have an End, and are drawing apace to it: We are hastning from the World, and the World from us; every Thing turns upon the same Axis of Time, only some describe a larger Circumference than others, and so are the longer in finishing their Circle; but finish it they will all, and even Time itself shall be no more. And therefore we ought not to take our Measure from such passing and unstable Things

Things as these, nor conduct our Lives and Conversations by them, but rather steer our Course by the fixt and immovable Points of the other World; by those Goods and by those Evils which remain for ever, which Sense cannot reach, which Faith only can see, and which Eternity only can measure.

Thirdly, Another Reason why we should not govern ourselves by Sense, that is, by what we see in this World, but by Faith, that is, by what we believe and expect in the next, is, Because there is no universal Justice done to Men in this present World, according to the different Conduct of their Lives; the complete and final Administration of That being (for several wise and momentous Reasons) suspended and adjourn'd to another State. That this is so, need not be shewn, it being the great Objection of all bad Men, and the Complaint of many good ones, that Happiness and Misery are so promiscuously and indifferently dispensed, that Men are not dealt with according to their Doings, but that Vice usurps the Happiness which belongs to Virtue, and Virtue groans under the Calamity which is due to Vice. The Sum is, here Justice and Judgment slumber and sleep, *like Things happen to all*, or if there be any Difference made, 'tis on the Side of wicked Men, who commonly speed best. But hereafter the Divine Nemesis will awake, and, taking to her her Sword and her Balance, redress all the Inequalities

equalities that have happen'd during the Time of her Slumber, and distribute to every one his own. Then Virtue shall recover her Right out of the Hands of Vice, and Vice shall be as miserable as it deserves. And therefore since we profess to believe this, we should live and govern ourselves by this Faith, and proceed in our Choice of a good or bad Life by this Measure, and not by those visible Events which appear to our View in this Life, which is a State of Trial, not of Reward.

Fourthly, There is yet another very considerable Reason why it concerns all Christians thus to *walk by Faith, and not by Sight*, and that is, That the Privation of sensible Good may not be a Punishment to them in the other World. That there will be such a Privation is here supposed, and in itself most certain. Within a little while we must part with all sensible Objects, and utterly lose the Enjoyment of them. Let us adhere to the Creatures ever so closely, and hug and embrace them ever so dearly, we must let go our Hold: When the Thread of Life shall be cut, all will fall with it, the Enjoyments of Sense will all be at an end, and the whole Creation will at one Blow be separated from us, and drop away under us. If therefore we would have this total Privation of all sensible Objects, in which we shall unavoidably be all placed by Death, not to be painful and tormenting to us, we must now accustom ourselves to despise

pise what our Senses recommend to us as pleasant, learn to be without what is grateful to them, deny our Appetites so long till they cease to crave; and, in one word, learn to walk by Faith, and not by Sight.

And the great Advantage of thus walking by Faith is, that it will help us to overcome the World, that is, to subdue the Impressions that are made upon us by the Creatures; to suppress all worldly Passions and Inclinations; those especially which tempt us to place our Good and our Happiness in the Things of the World, and forsaking the true Fountain of living Water to apply our thirsty Mouths to these broken Cisterns that can hold none; to be no longer Slaves to our Sensuality, our Covetousness, nor our Pride, or Ambition. Not to suffer ourselves to be carried away with the Torrent of a vicious Age, or to have so much Regard for the Manners, Customs, or Authorities of a wicked World, as to be conformed to them, or follow a Multitude to do Evil; not to be over-aw'd by great Examples, nor corrupted by bad ones: To be above the Opinion of the World, and not to hang upon the Censures or Applauses of Men, or upon their Kindness or Disaffection towards us; nor to be transported into undue Passions by any of the Injustices, Unkindnesses, Affronts, Abuses, or Disappointments that we meet with in the World: To overcome the Evil as well as the Good of it; to bear its Frowns as well as not

to be enchanted with its Smiles; and no more to be disturb'd at the Experiment and Discovery of its Vanity, than to be over-charm'd with its delusive Shew of Happiness; as well knowing that there is a Good proportion'd to the Importunity of our Appetites, and that the other World has Enjoyments that will fill that Emptiness of our Natures, which this only deludes and stretches wider, and that will quench that Thirst which this only inflames: To be equal Proof against Prosperity and Adversity, so as not to be dispirited by the one, nor intoxicated by the other, but to carry an even and well-pois'd Mind in all the Turns and Varieties of a reeling and tottering World, and in *whatever State we are, therewith to be content.* In fine, not to have our Virtue or our Goodness depend upon any worldly Interests, Accidents, or Circumstances, nor upon any Juncture, Revolution, or Turn of the Times; but at all Times to keep exactly to what is right and fit, whether it pleases or not, whether we get or lose Friends or Preferment by it, and to resolve at any Rate to please God, and satisfy our Consciences, however the World goes, and whatever the World says or thinks.

This is to *overcome the World*; and 'tis a *Life of Faith* that will enable us to obtain this great Victory. For there are but two Passions whereby Man may be wrought upon, Hope and Fear; and there are but two Motives to
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work upon those two Passions, that is, Good and Evil. But now Faith with one Hand points out to us infinitely greater Goods, and with the other infinitely greater Evils than any the World has to propose to us. And how poor an Impression will be made upon our Hearts, *By all this will I give thee*, when this present World is so much out-bid by the Faith of the next !

But then it must not be any Faith that can do all this, not a few slight, superficial, transient Acts of it, but a firm, hearty and thorough Belief, such as abides upon our Minds, and goes into the ordinary Habit of our Thoughts, which we daily carry about with us, and constantly converse with ; it must be *walking by Faith*. For the Temptations of the World consist of present Goods and present Evils, and this is the great Advantage it has above Christ, that it courts our Affections, bribes our Passions, and cheapens our Souls with ready Money in hand. And therefore unless we can set one Certainty against another, oppose Evidence to Evidence, the Evidence of Reason and Faith to the Evidence of Sense ; the Scale that holds the World (as light as it is) will weigh down the other, and our prejudiced Hearts will give Sentence for Earth against Heaven. But when once our Faith of the other World comes to be like the Sense of this, and we are as well assured of Heaven and Hell, as of any of those
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sensible Objects which touch us with their Impressions, what Temptation then would find Audience, or so much as Admittance with us? and what would all the World be to a Man that firmly and heartily believes these great Things, and walks by the Faith and serious Consideration of them?

If then we will be of the Number of those few that abandoning the Measures of Sense dare betake themselves to a Life of Faith, we must retire from the Noise and Hurry of the World, as much and as far as we can, rid ourselves of all its Weights and Incumbrances, be as loose from it, and have as little to do in it as possible we may, that so Distance and Absence (that which so cools our Affections to the other World) may make us indifferent to this, prevent our taking new Impressions, and wear out those we have already received. At the same time, let us be earnest with the Almighty, that he would turn away our Eyes, lest they behold Vanity, and quicken us in his Way, that narrow unfrequented Way of Faith, which only leads to Life and Glory: And lastly that we may be the better able to form our Resolutions agreeable hereunto, let us implore him that as on this Time he pour'd out his holy Spirit in an extraordinary and visible Manner on the holy Apostles to confirm their Faith and fortify them in their Ministry, so he would send the same Comforter into our Hearts, to purge them from worldly sensual Inclinations,

Inclinations, and enable us to live this Life of Faith. 'Tis this divine Power that effectually convinces us of the Vanity of the World below, and of the high Interest we have of that above. Without this inward Monitor the Temptations of the World would be much an Over-match for the best Dispositions. The good Things of this Life are pleasant and palatable, certain to Possession, and proportion'd to Appetite; whereas the other World is out of View, and the Satisfaction of it too fine for Vice and corrupt Nature to take hold of. Hence it is that Reason and Proof cannot always carry the Point, and that our Affections are too strong for our Faith: But when this divine Succour interposes, the Adversary retreats, the Body of Sin is broken, and the Difficulties of Nature give way. Then the Deaf hear and the Obdurate relent: The Mountains melt like Wax at the Presence of the Lord, who turns the hard Rock into a standing Water, and the Flint-Stone into a springing Well. The strongest Prepossessions are master'd, the Will made pliable to Virtue, and the Barren grown fruitful to good Works. This disposes us to consider that we shall be capable of Happiness or Misery to all Eternity: That Pain will be as troublesome to us, and Pleasure as acceptable, Millions of Ages hence as they are now; and that we ought to make a Provision

vision for the longest Duration of our Being, and not grasp at any Satisfaction inconsistent with our Hopes of a greater. In a word, 'tis this Almighty Comforter that strengthens, stablishes, and settles Men in the right Judgment of Things; makes them steadily pursue what they have wisely resolved; and thoroughly convinces them, that 'tis their highest Interest as well as Duty to live *by Faith, and not by Sight.*





On the OMNIPRESENCE of GOD.

PSALM CXXXIX. 2.

Thou (O Lord) art about my Path and about my Bed, and spiest out all my Ways.

SO far do the Passions of the Generality of Mankind overbalance their Reason and Judgment, that the World was never yet so happy in the Majority as to be kept in Order by a bare Reverence for Virtue. To talk to People of being virtuous merely for Virtue's sake, of being pious, benevolent and just, purely because it is comely and comfortable to be so, is propounding to them a System of Felicity beyond the reach of their Conceptions. 'Tis true, there are few but upon occasion will talk in commendation of Justice, Charity and Kindness, and would be very angry if we should not believe them; but when any Interest or Humour puts them upon the Trial, 'tis too apparent what a slender hold Morality has upon them: In order therefore to meet with the Insincerity, and restrain the Passions, of Men, human Laws were invented and instituted; the Design of these publick Provisions being

being to make all Injustice and Encroachment an uncreditable as well as unprofitable Practice; and that the Punishment of an ill Action should always exceed the Pleasure: That those who were not generous enough to be govern'd by Reason and Humanity, might be disciplin'd into Duty by Smart and Sense: But this must be confess'd to be an ineffectual Remedy; for not to mention that many Vices are always overlook'd and lie out of the Verge of the most comprehensive Laws, even those Crimes which are mark'd with Vengeance in the Sanction frequently escape the Execution, the Offenders being either too cunning to be discover'd, or too powerful to be punish'd: That Men therefore may be sensible of the Vanity of relying upon Force or Fraud; that they may not fancy they can either overreach or overmaster Justice; God has declar'd that he himself will be the final Judge of their Actions, and that, in order to judge the World in Righteousness, he is every where present *beholding the Evil and the Good*, a Witness of the Reins and a true Searcher of the Heart. This Omnipresence of the Deity is describ'd in the Psalm from whence the Text is taken, with such noble Energy and in such lively Images, that 'tis justly esteem'd one of the sublimest Passages of holy Writ.

Thou, says he, art about my Path and about my Bed, and spiest out all my Ways. Whither shall I go then from thy Spirit, or whither shall

I go then from thy Presence? If I climb up into Heaven thou art there; if I go down to Hell thou art there also; if I take the Wings of the Morning and remain in the uttermost Parts of the Sea even there also shall thy Hand lead me, and thy right Hand shall hold me.

In considering these Words I shall make it my Endeavour,

I. To prove that God is Omnipresent.

II. To shew of what Consequence a firm Belief of this Doctrine is to us, and what Influence it ought to have on our Manners and Conduct.

Now that God is Omnipresent is a Truth which is highly agreeable to our Reason, and deducible from our natural Notions of his Being and Attributes. It enters as necessarily into the Idea we form of an all-perfect Creator, that he must be unlimited by Time and Space, as it doth into our Notion of a Creature that he once had a Beginning, and can be but in one Place at once; there being no Medium in our Conceptions between a Person's being every where or only in one Place at one Instant of Time. God's Omnipresence has so necessary a Connexion with the rest of his Attributes, that without it he could neither be infinitely wise, powerful, or good. Imagine him but absent from any one Place at any one Instant of Time, and it follows that he could do nothing there, or must do it by the Interposition of a Creature, each of which Suppositions

fitions prevents his being all-powerful. Neither could he be thus any more all-knowing than almighty; for his Knowledge as well as Action must necessarily be deficient if not every where present. Where too would infinite Justice and Goodness be without this Perfection? How could God defend and reward his Servants, or punish his Enemies, if he were not present in all Places, and a constant Observer of all Persons and Actions?

And as this appears entirely agreeable to our Reason and highly correspondent with the other Attributes of the Deity: So it is likewise manifest from the Works of Creation and Providence.

The least we can conceive necessary to the Production of the World out of Nothing must be the universal Presence of the powerful pregnant Cause from whence it sprang. A wise Composition, moreover, demands the intimate Presence of an all-wise Being, as bare Production doth of a powerful one. How else could Order, Usefulness, and Beauty be establish'd? How could wise Ends be fix'd, or proper Means to accomplish such Ends be determin'd? And as Creation plainly manifests the Truth of this Doctrine, so Providence as constantly supports the Proof of it. Nothing seems plainer than that the Continuance of Being and Order demands the same Presence and Influence as the Creation of them. Whether we consider the Natural or Moral World,
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there is such an infinite Variety of Parts and Movements, Wheels within Wheels; there are such opposite Powers in different Creatures, so strong Counter-Motions, that to hold such a Frame as the Universe in its just Poise, to confine every Thing in its proper Place, and to supply every Creature in its peculiar Necessities, requires no less than infinite Wisdom every where present to temper and to direct.

So that it has not only been the Belief of all wise Men, that there is an omnipresent Deity presiding in every Part and Portion of Being; but it has been likewise prov'd to Demonstration, that no Properties of Matter, nor any mechanical Laws of Motion can possibly account for the Regularity of the Universe; nor, in any wise, are adequate Causes of the wonderful Effects in the Heavens and Earth. These are standing Arguments to all Nations, and to almost all Capacities, that God must be every where, who has every where left such Evidences of his Power and Goodness.

And yet it must be acknowledged, that, though we have all the Assurance imaginable of God's infinite Presence, 'tis very difficult to conceive the Manner of it. It is hard to say how a Being can be in all Places, yet not be extended; or how extended, yet not be divisible. Of the other Perfections of the Divine Nature we have fair and strong Images in many of his Creatures. Some distant Resem-

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blances

blances of his Wisdom, Goodness, Truth, and Mercy are daily found amongst Men. But in all the Ranks and Orders of Creatures there is nothing like Immenfity or Omnipresence to be conceiv'd. This is an Excellency the most peculiar and surprizing of any in the Divine Nature, and it should therefore fill our Minds with the higher Admiration of the almighty Being it belongs to. For 'tis in this as in many other Instances of Things wonderful in themselves; that though the Manner of their Existence is difficult and perplexing to our Conceptions, yet the Certainty of them is confirm'd both by Reason and Revelation.

And now if we would either attend to the plain Dictates of our Nature, or hearken to the undeprav'd Suggestions of our Minds, there would be little Fear of positive Infidelity in this Point.

The main Danger lies in Practice. We are too apt to stifle our Reason, and lay a Check on our Memories, for the sake of our Vices. There is no Man who acts agreeable either to his Nature or his Duty that ever suspects the Omnipresence of his Creator; because neither his Interest or Inclination can lead him to do it. But Men no sooner become Criminals than this Presence grows uneasy to them. They wish that there was no such troublesome Spy upon their Actions, and they are in a fair Way to believe there is none. We have a mischievous Faculty of imposing upon ourselves, when

when we set heartily about it, and the Corruption of the Will may possibly infect the Understanding to such a degree as to efface intirely at last the Sense of the Déity. But that we may none of us allow ourselves in this wilful Forgetfulness of our Maker, I shall in the

IId Place endeavour to shew of what Consequence a firm Belief of the Omnipresence of God is to us, and what Influence it ought to have on our Manners and Conduct.

If we consider ourselves either as private Persons, or as Members of Society, we shall find that both our Virtue, our Interest, and our true Happiness depend on this Persuasion.

Imagining ourselves always in the Presence of our Creator is the noblest Incentive to virtuous Actions. We are Creatures of a social Disposition and Make; and Company and Observation give a Spring and Spirit to our Performances of any kind. A Coward can fight in presence of his General, and the slothfullest Servant be diligent under the Eye of his Master. Even Hypocrisy itself, that most grievous of Tasks, owes its Being to Observation. And if the Notice and Regard of Men can work such Miracles, as to raise the Dead to Life, and make People appear all on Fire for Religion, who never had one Spark of it kindled at their Hearts; what might we not expect from a constant Persuasion of the Presence of God; God, whose Approbation is truly valuable, as

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being

being the most infallible Judge of what is right, and candid Observer of what is wrong? Who looks not on us with the Indifference of an idle Spectator, nor the Severity of an ill-natured one; but joins all the Tenderness of a Father to the Authority of a Master. What Life would this give to our publick Devotions? And how acceptable would our Addresses then be to the Divine Majesty present with us? This would be capable of raising the noblest Impulse in the Heart, and filling it with the most sublime and worthy Conceptions: It would give a Turn of Decency and Composure to the Mind, and create in it a vigorous and lively Devotion. Neither would it less animate our most secret Services. A most extensive Part of a good Man's Duty is concealed from every Eye but the all-seeing one: 'Tis perform'd in that Temple not made with Hands, where the Almighty delights to dwell: It consists in a strict Review of our Lives and Actions, in the Discipline of our Passions, and in renewing our Resolutions. All this is an Homage paid more directly to the Presence of the divine Being, and can never rightly be perform'd but under the deepest Sense of it.

And as the Belief of God's Presence would incite us to Virtue, so 'tis equally necessary to restrain us from Vice. Our wise and good Creator, amongst other Guards of Virtue, has implanted in our Minds the Passion of Shame. Shame is a Pain which arises from the Sense
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of being observ'd, when we are doing any thing base or misbecoming us, and from the Apprehension and Terror of being discover'd and expos'd. This is one of the strongest Passions in the Human Breast; so that when a Man has never so great an Inclination to Sin, he will still start at the Dread of being discovered; and be still willing to retain that Reputation which the Shadow of Virtue bestows, though he be hardy enough to shake Hands with the Substance. The wiser *Heathens* were so sensible what a Check this laid upon Vice, that *Seneca* observes that much the greater Number of Crimes which Men commit had never been if Witnesses had been present.

The same great Moralist proposes two Considerations in this Case, by way of Appeal to this Passion of Shame. The first is, *reverence thyself*; that is to say, Be as much afraid and ashamed of doing a base Thing against thy own Reason and Judgment, as if all Mankind were Beholders of thy Actions. I must own there is something very good in this Rule, but it does not by any means go far enough. For what if a Man be bad enough to see nothing in himself worth reverencing? What if, as the young Prince said to *Cyrus*, there's something like two Selves or Souls in a Man; and the bad one is Master? Then this fine Precept loses all its Effect.

On the Omnipresence of God.

The other Consideration is this: *Imagine thyself*, saith he, *always in the Presence of a Cato, a Scipio or a Lelius, and dare to do nothing which would not stand the Test of their Censure.* But what Need or what Use for an imaginary Presence, when we have a most real and a most awful one thus addressing himself to us: *I the Lord search the Hearts, I try the Reins, even to give every Man according to his Ways, and according to the Fruit of his Doings.* Behold a greater than *Cato* or *Lelius* is here, whose Eyes are upon all the Ways of Men, and before whom all the Thoughts of their Hearts are laid open. Human Weakness indeed we may often impose on, and gloss over our Actions so as to dazzle Mens Eyes. Offence's fair Face may in this World screen a foul Heart, and the Fig-leaf Veil of Hypocrisy conceal from Men our Impurity, but we can hide nothing from the Almighty; even from him who is to be the final Judge of our Actions, and by whose impartial Determination we must stand acquitted or condemn'd.

And as the Belief of this Doctrine has so great an Effect upon our Virtue, so consequently upon our truest Interest and highest Pleasure. The Omnipresence of God presents us with such a Friend as we want; an all-sufficient Help in every Extremity. God can neither be absent, nor be wanting in Power, Goodness, and Compassion: He can
never

never misjudge our Case, nor misapply his Favours.

There is nothing in God but what the virtuous Man hath the present Possession of. *His Eyes are over the Righteous, and his Ears are open to his Prayers*, whilst underneath him are his everlasting Arms to carry and to sustain him; his Right-hand wears him as a Signet, and his Left-hand pours down Blessings upon him; his Wings are spread for him, and his Bowels yern with Compassion over him; he himself is about his Bed and about his Paths, not so much *to spy out his Ways*, as to preserve him in them all, and *to wait that he may be gracious unto him*: In a word, all the Securities that God's preserving Mercy can signify, the Watches of his Providence, the Blessings that fulfil his Attributes of Goodness, all are exerted upon his Occasions, are made the present Objects and Satisfactions of his nearest Senses, and *he may taste and see how gracious God is*. How readily then in return for so much Kindness ought we to comply with his Request in giving him our Hearts, and letting our Eyes observe his Ways! How sincerely ought we to cry out with David, *O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee; my Soul thirsteth for thee!*

But if, on the contrary, we stand out against all these Instances of his Goodness, and wilfully offend and reject his Mercy, we hurry ourselves into irreversibile Ruin. If God's

Goodness once be unobserv'd and affronted, there is no other Attribute a Sinner has to fly to for Hope; his Holiness cannot behold Iniquity; his Justice speaks nothing but Condemnation to Guilt; his Power without Kindness is but omnipotent Destruction; But if we have his Goodness on our Side, we have an Advocate in his Bosom that will bear up against the rest; we shall dwell safely in the *Defence of the most high, and abide under the Shadow of the Almighty.*

And further, as this habitual Sense of the divine Omnipresence is of infinite Consequence to us as private Persons, so likewise as social Creatures and Members of the State.

And here we may venture to say that the Belief of this Truth is not only the great Support of human Laws, but hath a much greater Influence than they either have or possibly can have. For after that the Law hath provided against Ungodliness and Wrong never so wisely, yet still human Justice will find great Obstructions from the base want of Evidence. Facts will be obscure and Testimonies inconsistent; so that the *probably* Guilty must often go unpunish'd, lest the *possibly* Innocent should happen to suffer. But this Doctrine points out an all-knowing Judge, who will produce our own Consciences in Evidence against us, and render infallibly to every one according to his Works. Would he who considers himself as standing Face to Face with the great Judge of the

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the Earth, dare in that Moment to bear false Witness against his Neighbour; to oppress the Poor, the Fatherless, or the Widow; to withhold his Bread from the Hungry, or refuse to clothe the Naked with a Garment? Or would any one who is convinc'd of his Maker's continual Presence with him, be mad enough to profane that sacred Name with Oaths and Blasphemies, and to challenge his God, with all his Thunder about him, to inflict Damnation on his Soul and Body? No; we must have taken the utmost Pains to thrust God out of our Thoughts, before we can be prevail'd on to commit such Actions before him, as we should not dare to be guilty of even before an Equal or an Inferior.

And now what has been said has, I hope, convinc'd us of what Importance it is both to the Virtue of particular Persons and the Peace of Society, to have the Sense of God's Omnipresence ever fix'd on our Minds. I shall therefore only beg leave, before I conclude, to make a brief Reflexion or two on this Doctrine, in order to render the Consideration of it farther useful to us.

In the first Place then let us reflect upon it as one certain Consequence of God's Omnipresence, that all human Actions shall be brought to publick View and Censure: That a Light shall be struck into all the Works of Darkness, and through all the Disguises of Hypo-

Hypocrisy: That then every Vice shall appear in its own proper Colours, and every secret Injury proclaim its Author. Shame for Sin is a natural Debt which every one must pay; and unless we take it upon ourselves *here*, we can never expect to avoid it *hereafter*. Swift are the Wings of the Morning those sprightly Messengers of Light, and yet if our Activity was equal to theirs we should be utterly incapable of removing ourselves from his great Tribunal. Dark and deep are the Regions of Hell; yet those would not conceal us from his all-piercing Inspection; or should we find out some of those lonely Apartments of Nature, where the Sun never came, nor living Creature appear'd, even there also should we find the Almighty: There would our Actions and our Thoughts too be made as conspicuous as if we were plac'd in the publick View of the World.

And let us consider further that God does not only see us, but will at last make us see him too, even whether we are willing or not. As the Happiness, so the Misery, of a future State, will consist in the Presence and Vision of the Almighty. What will the harden'd Wretch then do (who now never lifts up his Eyes to his God) when Death shall usher his naked Spirit into the immediate Presence of his Judge, then visible in all the Terrors of Majesty? In vain may he call to the Rocks
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to fall on him, in vain implore some friendly Mountain to cover him ; nothing will be then capable to hide him from his Sight, or screen him from his Justice. Let us therefore *now* think on him, whilst on the Throne of Mercy, and always live and act as in his Presence and View. Let not a little shining Clay, the Wind of popular Applause, or a brutish Passion ever be suffer'd to drive God from our Eyes ; but let us industriously cherish such Impressions of his Presence as may make us wiser and better, and consequently happier, both in this Life and that which is to come.





On Practical ATHEISM.

TITUS i. 16.

*They profess that they know God, but in Works
they deny him.*

WERE we to suppose a Man to start into Being, with all his Faculties full-blown, and his Understanding in the ripest and best furnish'd Condition, unassaulted by the various Temptations of the World, unbewilder'd in its Vanities, and unacquainted with its Delusions, and that this rational Creature was to be told and convinc'd, that he was brought into that Being by a supreme and self-existent Creator, who watched over him, and guarded him in his Providence, as well as produc'd him; and that in consequence of that natural Right he had over him, he would take a future Account of his Actions, and reward or punish him eternally hereafter, agreeable to his Conduct and Behaviour in this World; and at the same time be told, that the Generality of Mankind believed these great Truths, and built their Expectations on them too; and yet notwithstanding all this, that in their whole

whole Behaviour in Life they *deny that God* whom in principle *they profess*; that the whole Course of their Actions is an explicit Contradiction to the Tenour of their Faith: Would he believe this to be possible? Would not his Reason give the lye to the Evidence of his Senses, and would not he rather conclude that he could not see or hear, than that such things were true? And yet too true they are. Men are now practical Infidels, in contradiction to every manly Conviction; and as in the first Ages of the *Roman* Republick several exalted heroick Spirits devoted themselves to Death voluntarily for the Good of their Country, so the Heroes of our Days run into Destruction with their Eyes broad open, and devote themselves for the Welfare of Satan's Empire. Men so set upon Death that they condemn themselves in that which they act; and tho' one would think that there would be very little Satisfaction in those Pleasures which Condemnation thrusts itself into, yet such are, it seems, the Satisfactions of Sin.

Astonishing! that Christians who have the best Faith in the World, and the strongest Motives possible to Virtue, should be the most deficient in the Practice of it! We are told of some Pagans that happen'd to hear certain Socratical Lectures upon the Immortality of the Soul, that they were so highly transported with the glorious News as to be ready to make away with themselves in order to enter directly
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upon the blessed State they were inform'd of, and they were so much in earnest about it too, that the Magistrate thought it necessary by a publick Edict to prohibit such Lectures, lest the Country should be unpeopled. But lo! a greater than *Socrates* is here! Much higher and plainer Conviction have Christians of a future State; *Life and Immortality is to them brought to Light thro' the Gospel.* But to what Purpose, whilst in their Works they deny what they profess to believe? The Heathen *Socrates* gave solemn Thanks to God, that by his Providence he was a Philosopher and not a Barbarian: And shall the Dawnings of natural Light be more ravishing than the Beams of the Sun of Righteousness? Shall *Tully* break out into a kind of Ecstasy, *O Philosophy, one Day spent agreeable to thy Precepts is preferable to a whole Eternity of Vice?* And shall scarce a Christian be found to join with the Psalmist and cry out, *A Day in thy Courts, O Lord, is better than a thousand?* No, too true is the Description in the Text of the present Race of Christians; those practical Atheists, who do not, as the notional one, expressly deny the Being of God and ridicule the Belief of him, who do not deride the Notion of an After-state as the Dreams of the Night, and represent Heaven and Hell as imaginary Scenes; No, they profess to believe that there is a God, and seem concern'd that others should believe it too; nay, they profess not only to believe a God,

God, but to know him; to be so well acquainted with his Nature and with his Will, with his Works and with his Ways, nay, and with his very Decrees, as if he had obtain'd not only *Moses's* Sight, but his Will, and had seen not the Back-parts only, but the Face of God. Nor are they content to sit down with bare Deism, but with a God acknowledge both Providence and a reveal'd Religion, and particularly the Christian, as the only one that can justly pretend to the Faith of a reasonable Creature, and that is at once worthy of both God and Man. And yet with all their Faith and Knowledge, and their high Pretensions to both, you will find them as loose and disorderly in their Manners as if they believ'd nothing of what they profess, any more than those who are declared Infidels. They have an Angel's Form and Voice, but a Devil's Foot, break the Commandments with a sound Creed, and march on in the Way to Hell with Directions to Heaven in their Hands. And here they strike in with the Atheist again; they walk with him in the same Road, though disputing against him as they go; disavow his Principle, but conspire with him in his Intention, and most effectually do his Work, and will no doubt share with him in his Wages. Such Men there were even in the first and best Days of the Church, and I am afraid there are many such now, to whom this Character of the Apostle may be applied most aptly;

aptly; *They profess that they know God, but in Works they deny him.* From which Words I shall take occasion to shew,

First, That the profess'd Belief of a Deity is consistent with an ill Life, or, that those who profess to believe the Being of a God, may and do often lead ill Lives.

Secondly, That an ill Life is a real Denial of God, or, that those who lead wicked Lives do really deny That God whom they otherwise profess.

Thirdly, I shall mark out some particular Vices and vicious Practices which are in a more eminent Manner Denials of God.

Concerning the First of these, *that the profess'd Belief of a Deity is consistent with an ill Life*, I need not say much, because 'tis what we all know by visible Experience, and that so well, that there is more need to lament a Truth that reflects so much upon the Reason of Mankind, and is such a standing Shame and Reproach to our Natures, than to have it further laid open. But not to let this Part go without a little Reflexion, we may consider that though the external Profession of a God (whether he be believ'd or no) be a considerable Restraint upon Mankind, and an Instrument of publick Order in the World, yet this does not necessarily carry along with it an inward Sense of Religion, nor a true Regularity of Life and Conversation. For 'tis very possible that he who outwardly professes the Belief
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of a God, may in his Heart believe no such thing. He may with great Formality stand up at the Creed, and bow at the Name of *Jesus* too, and yet be one of those Fools *that say in their Hearts there is no God*. And then what will his Profession of the contrary signify towards the due Government of his Life? But suppose he that professes should also believe a God, yet he may form such wrong Conceptions of him, as may be so far from deriving any good Influence upon his Actions, that they may serve to corrupt and disorder them. But suppose him not only to believe a God, but to think rightly of him too, yet after all he may yield so little actual Attention to this his habitual Belief and Knowledge, he may so seldom think upon God, and so little consider what he believes and thinks of him, as still to lead an ill Life, and retain this great and fundamental Truth in Unrighteousness. And when he does so, we may argue as well backwards from his ill Practice to the want of his actual Belief, as we did before from the want of his actual Belief to his ill Practice. Which opens us an Entrance upon the second Thing proposed,

That an ill Life is a real Denial of God, or that those who lead wicked Lives do really deny That God whom they otherwise profess. For so the Apostle expressly, *They profess that they know God, but in Works they deny him*.

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Now all ill Livers by their Actions plainly declare, that either they do not thoroughly believe that there is a God, but are Atheists in their Hearts, whatever they may pretend or profess to the World, or at least that they have not a present Sense of their Belief, and do not actually consider that there is a God: They either are not really convinc'd and persuaded of that fundamental Truth, or else they do not duly attend to it: They are either under the Habit, or under the Act of Infidelity, which as it may very probably be call'd, during the Time that it lasts, a Denial of God, so 'tis that which the ill Life of any Man will justly warrant us to conclude of him. For did Men heartily and thoroughly believe the Existence of a God, with as firm and unshaken a Persuasion as they believe there is a Sun that shines upon them, or a King that rules over them, and did they actually and seriously weigh and consider with themselves what they believ'd; did this Truth lie open and bare to their Minds; were it present to them, as present as the Thought of their own Being is, when they see themselves in a Glass, is it possible that they should be so wicked as they are, and lead such immoral and irreligious Lives as they do? No certainly, this is such a mighty Idea, such a vast and pregnant Thought as would fill and wholly engage their Minds, and when this great Thought comes to be open'd and unravell'd, there are such momentous

momentous Truths inclos'd in it, as must needs strike such an awful Impression into the Spirit of the serious Considerer, as to preserve him from transgressing his Duty. For to think there is a God, is in more Words to think that there is a Being infinitely great and infinitely good, of the most perfect Justice, Wisdom and Power, able to bestow the greatest Happiness upon those that serve and obey him, and to inflict the utmost Misery upon disobedient and rebellious Spirits; that is present in every Place and to every Thing; that sees every Motion and every Thought that passes in the World, and will hereafter judge it in Righteousness; that hates Sin infinitely, and will punish it, if not repented of, everlastingly. And can a Man sin with this great and filling Thought before him, and staring him as it were in the very Face? If he can, I know not what Thoughts those must be that shall ever bring him to repent of it: But if he cannot, (and it appears by that very Argument, as well as from the Power and Efficacy of the Thought itself that he cannot) we may then justly conclude that if he presumes to transgress his Duty, 'tis because he has not a present and actual View of this Thought, and does not duly consider that there is a God, who is now his Witness, and will hereafter be his Judge. Whereby it plainly appears that Infidelity and Atheism lie at the Root of all Sin, and that God is really denied in some Degree or other by every

Worker of Iniquity, let him profess and declare to the contrary as much as he please.

Indeed this is the most effectual Way of denying him, since Mens true inward Sentiments are to be concluded more from what they do, than from what they say. A Man may deny the Being of God in Words, only for Argument and Discourse sake, or out of Levity and Vanity of Humour, to appear a Wit and a Man of Paradoxes; or it may be for Experiment, to try what others will say; though at the same time he has nothing of this in the Bottom of his Judgment. But when a Man shall deny him by the whole Tenor of his Life and Manners, 'tis plain that he really thinks what the other speaks, and there is more Reason why he should be believ'd upon his Life, than that the other should upon his Word; nay more, than that he himself should be believ'd upon his own Word to the contrary. For the bare Profession of a God is no convincing Argument that a Man believes a God, (though it may be an Argument of Charity when nothing appears to contradict it) since Interest and Decency may give us a sufficient Account of that Matter. But on the other Side, a wicked Life is a plain Demonstration that a Man disbelieves him, at least during his Continuance in it; an ill Liver being, as I have shewn, no better than an Atheist for the time being: Which in short is the true Difference between a practical and a speculative Atheist,

Atheist, the speculative Atheist being in Habit what the practical one is in Act, and the practical Atheist being in Act what the speculative one is in Habit.

And as a loose and profane Life is the most effectual, so 'tis also the most mischievous Way of denying a Deity: For besides that few will be so uncivil and unmannerly as to say in exprefs Terms (whatever they think) that there is no God; whenever any one is so hardy as to talk at that rate, 'tis such an Intrenchment upon publick Decency, such a Violation to common Modesty, such an Affront to the natural Sense of Mankind, that every one is presently alarm'd at it, and upon his Guard against it, and few will believe that the Man speaks in earnest, and so the Poison for want of due Infusion does but little Hurt. But now wicked Practices insinuate themselves by Degrees, and as it were insensibly and unawares; and, with themselves, that Principle of Infidelity from which they proceed, and of which they carry a very strong and contagious Tincture, whereby it comes to pass that the practical, though perhaps not always the worse Man, may yet do more real Mischief than the speculative Atheist.

However, whether he does or no, he is certainly more absurd and inconsistent with himself, and more self-condemn'd. They are indeed both of them Deniers of God, but with this Difference, that if the speculative Atheist

denies him in Practice, he denies him in Principle too, and so is a downright plain-dealing Sinner, consistent with himself, and throughout of a piece: But now the practical Atheist, though he lives altogether as the other does, yet he professes and pretends to better Things, and so adds Hypocrisy to his other Immoralities. As his ill Life is a sensible and breathing Scandal to his Profession, so his Profession is a constant upbraiding Objection and Aggravation to his ill living, exposing him to the just Censure and Derision, not only of good Men, but even of his very Brother Atheist, who may thus bespeak him, and insult over him: "What an absurd self-inconsistent Creature art thou! I indeed live a careless and dissolute Life, but 'tis because I hold no Principle that obliges me to live better; but thou (Fool as thou art) professest to believe a God, and yet liv'st as bad as I that hold there is none. Did I really believe what thou pretendest to do, that there is a God, I should think it concern'd me to lead another sort of Life than thou dost, and not to be such a self-condemn'd Fool as thou art. I would go on to deride thy Weakness, but that I rather believe thou art at Bottom as very an Infidel as myself, and that all thy Professions to the contrary are but mere Shew and Pageantry, something to blind the World, and to compass some politic Ends."

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Now what can a wicked Man reply to this? Unless it be to own the latter Part of the Charge, by confessing that there is indeed a Heart of Unbelief in him departing from the living God, and so to acquit himself from the Imputation of Absurdity and Self-Inconsistency, by owning that of Atheism and Infidelity; which indeed is in great Measure the Truth of the Case, since, as I have shewn, an ill Life is a real Denial of God, and those who lead wicked Lives do in effect *deny That God whom they otherwise profess.*

And why then do they profess him? Nay, why do they so much as take his venerable Name into their polluted Lips, since *they hate to be reform'd, and cast his Words behind them?* Why do they suffer their Lives thus to give the lye to their Profession, and their Profession thus daily to reproach and condemn their Lives? Why do they not either renounce their Faith or take more Care of their Works? Why do they not either throw up their Principle, or reform their Practice? Why are they such a standing, visible, living Contradiction to themselves?

What unaccountable Folly and Madness is This! And yet how many are there that are guilty of it! No fewer than all ill-living Christians, though some more notoriously so than others. Which leads me to the third Thing I propos'd, *viz.* to mark out some particular Vices and vicious Practices, which

are in a more eminent Manner Denials of God. And among these I reckon,

First, The placing one's End in any Creature, whether that Creature be one's self or any other Being. He that makes himself his End, that centers and terminates in himself, that refers all Things to himself, and measures all Things by the Relation which they have to his own private personal Interest, is a Denier of God to some Purpose, and holds one of the first Ranks of practical Atheists. There is indeed only the downright Idolater before him, though it be a little disputable to which belongs the Right of Precedency, since the self-ending, self-centring Man does in a very true and proper Sense idolize himself, by assuming to himself a Prerogative which the infinite God only has, or is capable of having. He *as God sits in the Temple of God*, and is a kind of Antichrist in Morality.

And so again the Man that places his End in any of the Creatures without him, in sensible and temporal Objects, in the Honour, Pleasures or Riches of this World, is a very gross Denier of God, as deifying and idolizing those little empty Things upon which he thus rests and reposes himself. Upon which account it is that the Scripture says expressly of one of these Lovers of Creatures the covetous Man, that he is an *Idolater*. And the same is altogether as true of the Ambitious and Voluptuous. These have their Idols too as well

as the covetous Wretch, though not of Silver and Gold. Their Idolatry is only a little more refined and spiritualized. For whoever desires any thing as his true Good, deifies that thing; and if that thing be not God, is truly guilty of Idolatry. For God only is the true Good, End and Centre of all rational Natures, having given them Appetites too large to be satisfy'd with any thing less than Himself. As for other things they are all over false and lying Goods, and accordingly promised as Rewards by the great Author of Falshood and Deceit. *All these Things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.*

In the next Place comes Hypocrisy. This is a Vice that carries upon it very deep Prints of Atheism, is season'd with a strong Tincture of Irreligion, and whose very Ground and fundamental Supposition is Infidelity. There were no such practical Atheists as the Scribes and Pharisees, the Leaven of their Hypocrisy was a Leaven of Unbelief, and they voided the Being of God as much by their Lives, as his Commandments by their Traditions. Indeed every Hypocrite is one of those Fools that say in their Hearts *There is no God*, or at least that he is not omniscient enough to be a Searcher of Hearts, and to know what is conceiv'd and entertain'd there. For did he thoroughly believe and seriously consider this, he would never content himself with the Form of Godliness, demure Looks, long and loud Prayers,

Prayers, and broad Phylacteries; but would endeavour to enter into the true Spirit and Power of it, and would take care to approve his inward Man to the Eye of God, as well as his outward to the Eyes of the World.

Some other Vices I might set down as chargeable with a more than ordinary Denial of God, such as Blasphemy, profane and irreligious Talking, idle Swearing, Perjury, &c. but after all there is no such Denial of God as final Impenitence, nor such a practical Atheist as the constant persevering Sinner, that lives on and dies in his wicked Courses. Other Sinners, let their Crimes be what they will, have however their lucid Intervals, sometimes in the Dark, and sometimes in the Light, like the successive Returns of Night and Day. But the final Impenitent has a thick Cloud always dwelling upon his Soul, is all over one solid impenetrable Mass of unmingled Darknes, like the Chaos before the Birth of Light: In one word, he is such a practical as very little differs from a speculative Atheist.

To conclude, The Use that I shall make of this whole Discourse is briefly this, that since (as you have heard) a wicked Life is a real Denial of God, we would take the greater Care *what Manner of Persons we are, and what Manner of Lives we lead, that we would no longer walk as the Gentiles walk, in the Vanity of their Mind, having their Understanding dark-en'd; but denying all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts,*

Lusts, live godly, righteously and soberly in this present World; and order our Conversation so as becomes the Gospel of Christ, lest we be found in the Number of those who deny God in Deed, while they profess him in Word, and be reckon'd by him among the worst of Infidels, while we place ourselves in the first Rank of Christians. Especially considering that the atheistical Part (which I fear is a great Part) of the World being willing to have as much Company as they can (as all Men are that walk in the Dark) and measuring us by our Actions more than by our verbal Declarations, will be ready to conclude that whatever we pretend, we are inwardly of the same Mind with them, because our Lives and Manners are so much alike. And 'twill be in vain to tell them of our Professions, or to go to stop their Mouths with Creeds and Articles; they will still insist upon what we do, and appeal from our Faith to our Works, as that which most truly speaks the Man, and reports the Temper and Complexion of his Mind. Let us declare and profess what we will, Men will judge of us after all by our Works, and so will God too, and so will he whom he has appointed to be the Judge of Quick and Dead, Christ Jesus; who in the last Day will return this killing Answer to all formal hypocritical Professors that shall then begin boldly to take Acquaintance with him upon the account of some outward Privileges: I tell you I know you not, whence ye are, depart from me all ye Workers of Iniquity. On



On Lukewarmness in Religion.

REV. iii. 15, 16.

I know thy Works that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would that thou wert cold or hot. Sa then because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my Mouth.

THERE is nothing which Moral Philosophy so strongly inculcates, or its Advocates so highly extol, as Mediocrity, or the *Golden Mean*, as it is call'd. In This they make the very Form and Essence of Virtue to consist, as being nothing but a just and reasonable Distance betwixt two vicious Extremes. Thus Liberality holds the Balance between lavish Prodigality and pinching Avarice; Valour betwixt audacious Rashness and shameful Cowardise; Patience between outrageous Fury and stupid Insensibility. On this Account the Moralists run into such extravagant Eulogiums on Mediocrity; they call it the *Rule of Righteousness*, the *Way of the Wise and the Happy*, and the *straight Line*; from which none can deviate to any Side, without falling down a Precipice. But whatever they may say to the Advantage

Advantage of this so-much-talk'd-of Indifference, and however eligible this middle Way may be in Morality, it is very certain, that in a Christian it not only ceases to be a Virtue, but is frequently a Vice. Thus Humility cannot too much debase itself, nor Charity be raised too high. Repentance must be extreme in its Remorse, and Hope in its Assurance; Faith in its Obedience, and Zeal in its Ardour; whilst the Measure of the Love we bear to our Creator must be this, That it have no Measure at all; seeing the Object of it is infinite, and there is no End of his Goodness. In all these Christian Graces therefore, Mediocrity is criminal and Moderation a Vice. A sufficient Proof of which we have in the Words of my Text, where our Saviour, addressing himself to the new-converted Christians of *Laodicea*, as their Pastor, complains thus feelingly of their Indifference; *I know thy Works* (says he) *that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would that thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my Mouth.*

Now these lukewarm Converts whom our Saviour so severely threatens, are such as lead their Lives in a reproachable Indifference betwixt Good and Evil; such as are neither formal Enemies, nor faithful Subjects of their Lord and Master, but Neuters in his Service. They are not entirely cold, for they have a Knowledge of God and of his Commandments; and
hot

hot they are not, for they have not his Zeal at their Hearts, nor observe his Precepts in their Lives: But, in a word, they are such as are not willing to take the pains to be wholly Christ's, and are very loth to be altogether the Devil's; but are desirous at the same time to serve both God and Mammon, to reconcile *Christ* and *Belial*.

It were heartily to be wish'd, that this Middle-Way between Heaven and Hell, that this provoking Indifference with which our Saviour seems so displeas'd as even to wish, that they were rather entirely cold, was not so very prevailing amongst us: To the Discouragement of which I shall make it the Business of the following Discourse to prove the absolute Necessity of active Virtue, and the real Practice of good Works, to recommend us to Heaven; that we are not only requir'd to *cease to do evil*, but likewise to *learn to do well*; not only to avoid the Commission of any Vice, but to be also conversant in the Discharge of actual Duties; to be positively as well as negatively good. Our plain Obligation to which may be consider'd both in respect to our Creator and our Fellow-Creatures,

And first, with regard to our Creator,

When God in infinite Wisdom created the World, he communicated to every Being, whether animate or inanimate, certain Powers and Capacities, to enable them to accomplish the Ends he had appointed them, and at the same

same time implanted in their Natures a Tendency or Bias towards the Attainment of such End.

Man in his original Formation was made in the Image of his Creator, was endued with an active intelligent Soul, and God himself *breathed into him the Breath of Life*, making him by that Means, in some measure, to partake of his own Nature, and bear an Affinity to him: Consequently, therefore, as God is the Original of Man's Nature, the Center of his Soul, and the ultimate End of his Being, the chief Impulse or Inclination in Human Minds must be towards a Re-union with their Creator, a Tendency towards him and a Propensity in all Things and at all Times to serve his glorious Purposes.

It is the same thing with the World of intelligent Beings, to do what Religion demands, as for a Beast to be guided by his Senses, or the Sun to give Light: For all that Religion requires of us, is but to comply with the Reason of Things; is but to move according to the Dictates of our Nature, and act with regard to a proper End: So that to live religiously, is but to live like Men; 'tis no more than keeping up to the great Characteristicks and Principles of our Being. And whenever a Man fails to exert himself agreeable to such Principles; whenever he ceases to exercise his utmost Powers and Capacities towards the Advancement of God's Glory, and a Re-union with him,

him, he violently resists the direct Laws of his Creator, lays asleep the noble Powers of his Nature, and neglects the whole Business for which he was sent into the World.

It is plain therefore, that we must not content ourselves with barely abstaining from evil Actions, (which is keeping at is were at a set Distance from God) but we must be zealous in the Exercise of such positive Acts of Piety, as may contribute to our nearer Approach to him: It is not enough that we do not directly dishonour him, but we must also give Occasion of celebrating his Praise and propagating the Glory of his Name. *Our Light must so shine before Men, that they may see our good Works and glorify our Father which is in Heaven.* And this Lesson we may learn effectually by taking a Survey of the State and Order of the other Parts of the Creation, and the Design of their Creator; for though no Virtue or Vice can be ascribed to those Beings, who know no Distinction betwixt Good and Evil, yet remiss and negligent Man may form a just Re-proof to himself on this Observation, that whilst he who is Lord of the Creation and Glory of the visible World, fails of exercising his Powers and Abilities, and answering the Ends and Purposes of his Nature, all the other Parts even of the inanimate World exert themselves to the utmost in promoting and fulfilling all that is expected from them. The Sun, the Moon, the Stars, Fire, Earth, Air, and

and Water, however sluggish and heavy they appear in themselves, never fail to act according to their several Principles, and regularly attain their several Effects, by continually maintaining their proper Motions and Revolutions, for the Illustration of God's Glory, the Benefit of Mankind, and the noble Regularity and Harmony of the World. So if we turn our Eyes upon the Brute and barely-animate Order of Beings, we shall still find them in a State of Action under their proper Proportions, and making Advances towards the Accomplishment of their destin'd Ends.

From which Particulars it evidently appears, that the several Powers and Capacities of all Beings are to be exerted and exercised according to the Direction and Appointment of their Creator; and that if any one should suspend the Exercise of such Power and Capacity, so as not to act at all, it would as palpably violate the divine Appointments as if it was to act in direct Contrariety to it. And thus the general Laws of created Beings plainly point out to us the Obligations we lie under to the actual Exercise of Virtue and Goodness. Whilst to the Christian World the holy Scripture confirms these natural Notices, and enforceth them in several Instances. For there we are taught that *the Heavens declare the Glory of God*, the Elements also and their Compounds, *Fire and Hail, Snow and Vapours, Wind and Storm fulfilling his Word*. There we are required to

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learn Diligence in our Duty from the minutest Reptiles, exerting themselves according to the natural Tendency of their Beings: *Go to the Ant, thou Sluggard, consider her Ways, and be wise.* There our Saviour himself, from an Observation of the vegetable World, tells us, that every Tree that brings not forth good Fruit is hewn down and cast into the Fire. Not only those Trees which produce corrupt Fruit, but those that do not actually bring forth good Fruit; those that produce no Fruit at all must be destroy'd: *Behold, says the Owner of the Vineyard in the Parable, these three Years I come seeking Fruit, and find none; cut it down, why cumbereth it the Ground?* Agreeable to this is the Parable of the Talents, where it is plain, that the Servant so severely punish'd had not any ways employ'd his Talent to the Dishonour of his Lord, had not abused it, or converted it to any evil Designs in Opposition to him, had not so much as squander'd and wasted it by any Means, but he had neglected to improve it, to make any Use of it at all; and upon this single Point of his Sloth and Inactivity did his Condemnation turn: Though he had done no Evil, yet, because he had actually done no Good, was the dreadful Sentence pronounced against him. *Cast ye the unprofitable Servant into utter Darknes, there shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth.* From whence we learn, that all those who are so far innocent and harmless as not to lanch out
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into Enormities and yet spend their Lives and possess their Talents in an useless and unactive Manner, are justly obnoxious to the severest Punishments.

For though, by denying ourselves unlawful Pleasures and Advantages out of a Sense of Duty to our Creator, we undoubtedly acquit ourselves in an acceptable Manner: Though by struggling with our corrupt Inclinations, which are so continually undermining us within, and resisting the still more powerful Temptations, which assault us from without, we may in some measure procure the Approbation of Heaven; yet, still 'tis more than possible, we may do all this, and yet contribute little to the Advancement of God's Glory and Honour: For we are instructed that we must not live unto ourselves, but unto the Lord, and that whatsoever we do we must do all to the Glory of God.

Again, though we may be zealous in the Practice of the external Parts of Religion, regular in the Observation of every Ordinance, and punctual to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Church we adhere to, yet this is only remaining in the Porch to Virtue; these are only the Plumes and Trappings of Piety, under which many a soul Heart is hid. The Eyes are too often lifted up to Heaven, whilst the Heart is entirely employ'd below; a bended Knee and a dejected Face, are but too frequently Masks of a stubborn Temper and
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haughty Soul: Whilst others in the middle of their Fastings and Mortifications, feed and encourage the most sensual Passions. But God does not only require of us to seem good, but to be so. 'Tis not sufficient to profess well, but we must do well likewise.

To conclude this Head, the Language of our Souls, with the Impressions of the divine Wisdom throughout the Creation, the never ceasing Acclamations of other Creatures, all powerfully exhort us to glorify our Creator, and be diligent in his Service. A Man cannot look abroad but some Instruction of this Nature offers itself to his View: Some Notes of Adoration sound in his Ears; no Image in Nature so strong, no Language so easy to be understood; so that 'tis both highly unnatural and unreasonable, not to join in the Concert, and *glorify God both in our Bodies and Souls, which are his.*

Secondly, the actual Performance of good Works will appear absolutely necessary when consider'd in respect of our Fellow-Creatures.

For, next to the Advancement of God's Glory, which should be the chief Aim, as it is the chief End of every rational Creature, the Benefit of Mankind and the Advantage of Human Society demand the actual Exercise of good Works at our Hands: For, as we have observed before, that our Obligation to serve and glorify God lays us under a Necessity of performing all those positive Duties which may

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be conducive to that End; and does not consist alone in the Avoidance of Evil; so it is likewise evident, that the good Offices we owe our Neighbour are positive and actual, and consist not barely in forbearing to prejudice and do him hurt: It will never be look'd on as a Justification to say, We have done our Brethren no Injury (a Plea too commonly made use of in the World) but Acts of Mercy and Beneficence will be requir'd in the Account: for wide is the Difference betwixt the Oppressor and Benefactor, betwixt the Charitable and Injurious. 'Tis too frequently found, that he who is not desperate enough to be the one, is very far from being in the generous State of the other. 'Tis very little a Man adds to the Happiness of Mankind, only by forbearing to be a Thief or Robber. 'Tis very little a Man has to value himself upon, by coolly standing a Neuter in regard of his Fellow-Creatures, by a lukewarm Suspence betwixt Malice and Benevolence. This is shutting out all the great and social Virtues: At this rate Charity must lie naked in the Streets, and godlike Friendship never enter: Nothing but Self-Love and Self-Interest would reign. No; 'tis required of us not only that we should not hate our Neighbour, but that we should actually and ardently love him, and give him all possible Demonstrations of that Love, by bringing forth the visible Fruits of good Works. 'Tis not sufficient to keep to the Letter of the

Eighth Commandment, *not to steal*, but we must oblige, protect, and comfort to the utmost of our Power: 'Tis not enough that we do not covet any Thing that is his, but we must likewise communicate to him that which is our own. Those have little Reason to expect Admission into the blessed Society above, who do not contribute their utmost to the Happiness of human Society here on Earth.

When we are plainly told, that the fruitless Tree will be rooted out as an Incumbrance, what can those indolent Wretches think of themselves, who serve to no other Purpose but to drag their Bodies through the Benefits of the Air they are unworthy to breathe in; who, like useless Drones, only fatten on the Industry of others, and live a Burden in the Hive, they were appointed to support?

And now what Notions, alas! must all those Men have of Eternity and Salvation, who exert themselves in carrying on low Designs, and act like wise Men in Trifles, but in their main and eternal Concern, play the Fool and the Sluggard; who provide for a Day and take no Care for Eternity. They may boast as much as they please, that they have all Faith and all Knowledge, but the better they know these Things the more foolish as well as unhappy they are, unless they do them. Hence comes the Observation of *Job*, that there's a great Difference betwixt to know and to be wise. *Man*, says he, *finds out the Veins of Silver,*
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and the Beds of Sapphires : He bindeth the Floods from overflowing, and the Thing that is hid he bringeth forth to light. But amidst all this, Where, says he, shall Wisdom be found, and where is the Place of Understanding? Man knoweth not the Price thereof, neither is it to be found in the Land of the Living. Is it not the strongest Indication of a Man's being a Fool, that in Matters of the most weighty Concern and Moment he commits Follies which can never be recover'd, and neglects Opportunities which can never be retrieved? Who standing on the Beach and observing the Waves rolling in upon him apace, will use no Activity to escape, but like an insensible Rock suffer the Billows to rush on him and the Deluge to overwhelm him? And have they more Understanding, who trifle away the Day of God's Patience and Mercy, and foolishly disregard the important Business of doing Good? Who mind every Thing but *the one Thing needful*, and the most important Work of their whole Lives takes up no Part of it?

Various are the Reasons of this Negligence amongst Men, and many specious Pretences and Apologies are made for it; and yet not one tolerable Reason, not one passable Pretence amongst them all. There are some, who, tho' they are satisfy'd of the Reasonableness of Religion, are yet so devoted to the present World, that they confine all their Thoughts to their prospering here; they pro-

ness to know the Truth, and live in Communion with the Church, but with so much Carelessness, so much Indifference about the Matter, that 'tis plain their Religion is not got so far as their Hearts, and that were they put to their Choice, they would drive away their Saviour to preserve their Swine: But let these Men remember *that God is a jealous God*, and will not be contented to share with Mammon in their Affections.

Others again tell you they are so taken up with the Exercise of Piety and Devotion, praying, and preparing themselves for the Sacrament, that they cannot possibly find any Time to do good Offices to their Brethren; and therefore trust God will overlook such Trifles as these, and accept of their Piety and Devotion instead of it; not considering that *Mercy is better than Sacrifice*, and that 'tis the most ridiculous thing in Nature to neglect the End of Religion, under Pretence of using the Means of it; and because we are always preparing ourselves to do good, to think ourselves excus'd from doing it at all.

Others spend their Time in contending for the Faith, and are very busy about some Controversies in Religion, and therefore think it but reasonable they should be excus'd from those meaner kind of Duties, not considering that a right Faith is only in order to a good Life, and no farther valuable than it has an Influence on it; *that pure Religion and unde-*
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filed before God and the Father is this, to visit the Fatherless and Widows in their Affliction; and that the great Judge of the World will acquit and condemn Men according to the Good they have done or neglected in Acts of Mercy and Charity; for feeding the Hungry, and clothing the Naked; for visiting the Sick, and relieving the Distrest; which may be seen in the Description our Saviour gives us of the last Judgment, from whence appears the absolute Necessity of doing Good in this World, in order to obtain everlasting Happiness in the next.

And now, what has been said ought to be seriously consider'd by those who go on in a lukewarm Way betwixt Sinners and Saints; who, tho' they are free from the Vices of the carnal Man, are yet at a great Distance from the Perfections of the spiritual one; who hang in a State of Indifference between God and the World, without any Vehemence or Tendency to either; and though they have Experience enough to see through this grave Cheat which is so commonly put upon Life, yet still remain indulgent of Ease, and patient of Delusion: Such as are loth to offend God by flagrant Acts of Impiety, and yet are continually provoking him by neglecting to do those Things which are pleasing in his Sight.

Let us then all who have been hitherto unprofitable Servants, immediately take a View of the Precipice we stand on, and speedily retire

tire from the dangerous Brink to a safer Situation. Let our hitherto Lukewarmness and Neglect of good Works, be henceforth succeeded by Assiduity and Fervor in the Performance of them. Let us with the utmost Ardency and Eagerness contribute all that lies in our Power to the Honour of our Creator, and embrace every Opportunity of doing Acts of Charity and Beneficence to our Fellow-Creatures. Let us no longer suffer our Lives to run down in Indolence and Sloth, but directly set about this necessary and laudable Business of doing Good. Let us immediately renew our Covenants with Heaven, and take care that our good Actions keep pace with our Vows. Let us, like the Sun, increase every Day in our Vigour, and run the Race of Virtue with warmer Zeal. Let us like the Spring (we are entering on) be continually putting forth the ornamental Flowers of Virtue, and produce every Day blooming Instances of an enliven'd Piety. Let us carefully avoid being found at last in the detestable State of Lukewarmness, but so employ the Talents which are trusted in our Hands, that we may one Day be transported with that divine Eulogium, *Well done, thou good and faithful Servant, enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord.*

On the Value of an immortal Soul.

MATTHEW xvi. 26.

What is a Man profited if he shall gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul? Or what shall a Man give in exchange for his Soul?

'TIS the common Outcry of the Multitude, *Who will shew us any Good?* But how few deserve to have any Good shew'd them? For when their true Interest and Felicity is pointed out to them, they seldom embrace or enjoy them as they ought. Their sickly Minds are always roving after some visionary Gains; some distant Goddess is the End of their Pursuits. Thus they are perpetually laying out their *Money for what is not Bread*, and their *Labour for that which profiteth nothing*; gaining only what is infinitely to their Loss, and giving a Soul in exchange for a Bauble. Their heated Imaginations never suffer them to sit down coolly, (as true Wisdom would instruct them) especially when any Affair of great Moment is in dispute, and carefully to weigh what Proportion the Profits, all Circumstances consider'd, will bear to the
Loss;

Loss; for did we thus act and thus judge, we should find that our temporal and spiritual Interests are so interwoven, that whenever we are consulting about the one, we ought by no Means to leave the other unregarded. For there is no Business that we can employ ourselves in, no worldly Design that we can pursue, but may prove advantageous or prejudicial to our spiritual Interest. Whatsoever therefore is profitable, both for the Life that now is and for that which is to come, That yields a clear and certain Profit. But if whilst we are purveying for the Conveniencies and Satisfactions of this Life, we forfeit all the Interests and Comforts of a better, the Loss in that Case is unspeakably greater than the Gain can be. Upon the whole then, 'tis apparent, that we ought to take all these Things into Consideration together, and if we would calculate aright, we must calculate for Eternity. *For what is a Man profited if he shall gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul? Or what shall a Man give in exchange for his Soul?*

In which Words, there is Weight of Reason sufficient always to cast the Balance on the Side of Virtue and Religion, even when it stands in Competition with the highest Pitch of worldly Prosperity that can be supposed or imagined.

And that they may have their full Force upon our Minds, I shall,

First,

First, explain a little more particularly what the Nature of that Gain and Loss is, which here stand oppos'd to each other, viz. the Gain of the whole World, and the Loss of a Man's own Soul.

Secondly, I shall shew somewhat more distinctly, how vastly great the Disproportion is betwixt the one and the other. And,

First, That we may the better conceive what it is to *gain the whole World*, we must consider what the Nature and present State of the World is.

By the World then we are to understand the Earth, and the Fulness thereof, *i. e.* all the ample Provision that God has made for the Support, Comfort, and Benefit of Mankind; of all and every Part of which, God himself, upon a Review of his own Creation, pronounced that it was very good. So that the World is a very good World, and every way well adapted to minister to our Necessities and Conveniencies, if we could but use it in a fitting and becoming Manner. *To the Pure all Things are pure*; the whole World is free for them to use, and to enjoy, within the Bounds that Reason and Religion prescribe to them. And the Use and Enjoyment of all worldly Goods, or all of them that can come to any Man's Share, so long as it is confined within such Bounds, is well enough consistent with our Safety.

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But now, here lies the Difference; though the World be very good, as it is God's Workmanship, yet it is no longer so, when it is made the Idol of our Affections. For, as we first corrupt ourselves by the inordinate Love of it, so we corrupt the World also, by the unreasonable Abuse of the good Things with which it is furnish'd, and turn it into a World of Vanity and Sin. And under this Character the whole World, or all that is in the World, is reducible to three Heads, according to St. John; *the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life*; that is, Pleasures, Riches, and Honours; which are the several Objects suited to our most predominant Lusts.

Now we cannot indulge ourselves in the immoderate Pursuit of these worldly Acquisitions or Satisfactions, without disobeying and dishonouring God, or injuring our Neighbours or ourselves. All such Pursuits thereof are sinful, and as such, pernicious and destructive to our Souls.

And when Men will gratify their fleshly Appetites, beyond all the modest Rules of Temperance and Chastity; when they will make haste to be very rich, by any Means and at any Rate; when they affect Pomp and Grandeur, and aspire to raise themselves high, though it be upon the Ruins of Honour and Conscience; when they are resolved thus to make the most of the World, though they cannot grasp

grasp it all, this is the dear-bought Bargain of the Text.

It is therefore an unlawful Gain of the World, the unlawful Pursuit of Pleasures, Riches, and Honour, that stands here opposed to that, which is so much more than an Equivalent to them all, the Loss of a Man's own Soul.

The Nature of which, we come now in the next Place to enquire into.

Now this Loss consisteth, First, in a sensible Deprivation of future Happiness. And,

Secondly, in the most sensible Suffering of future Miseries.

It consists, First, in a sensible Deprivation of future Happiness. *Go ye Cursed* is but the first Part of the Sentence that the Wicked are like to hear at the Judgment of the great Day: But doubtless a very heavy Curse it is, a very terrible Punishment even this, *to be punish'd with everlasting Destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and the Glory of his Power.*

For, if it be the essential Happiness of the Saints in Light *to see God as he is, and to be made like unto him, and to dwell with him, in whose Presence is Fulness of Joy, and at whose Right-hand are Pleasures for evermore;* then to be eternally banish'd from that blissful Presence, never to be suffer'd to ascend the everlasting Hills, nor taste the Joys that wait on that Right-hand, must be a Loss indeed! No less than that of all Happiness, of which God alone

alone is the perpetual Source and Fountain. And the Deprivation of Happiness as necessarily implies Misery, as the Deprivation of Sight implies Darkneſs.

Inexpreſſible indeed is this Loſs! For it is the Loſs of ſuch Things as *Eye bath not ſeen, nor Ear heard, neither bath it enter'd into the Heart of Man to conceive.*

But, however languid and imperfect Mens preſent Notions may be of this unexperien'd Happineſs; however ſtupidly they may now deſire to barter it away, for the contemptible Droſs of this Earth; yet they will, beyond all Queſtion, have a very painful and afflicting Senſe of the Loſs of it, when once they come to ſee, and feel, that it is irrecoverably loſt to all Eternity.

When Sinners come once to find that there is indeed a Heaven, but barr'd up againſt them by a Gulph unmoveable; when they reflect, that the Joys and Comforts of that glorious Place, through the Purchase of Chriſt's Blood, are, by their own wilful Folly, forfeited for ever, how will it let looſe all their ſelf-revenging Paſſions upon them, and fill their loſt and abandon'd Souls with all the Bitterneſs of fruitleſs Remorſe, hopeleſs Complaints, and inconſolable Deſpair! The Loſs of Heaven therefore, is what will be very ſadly and ſenſibly felt one Day. But this is not the whole of the Sinner's Loſs, when he loſes his own Soul. For,

Secondly,

Secondly, Besides that he loses that Happiness of which it was capable, he plunges it moreover into endless Misery. If indeed Sinners could put off their Being at the same time that they cast away their Souls, this, I fear, they would be ready enough to accept, as an easy Composition for the Pleasures of Sin; they would be glad to make the most of the World at present, if they could be sure to hear no more of it hereafter; nay, they would quit (it may justly be suspected) all Hopes of future Happiness, if they could be secured against future Misery.

But the Mischief is, an immortal Soul cannot cease to be; and a sinful Soul, by God's just Decree, must not only continue to be, but to be miserable for ever: For this shall be the final Award of all Men as they stand divided into Righteous and Wicked: *Those shall go into Life eternal, but these into everlasting Punishment.* Which, that we may have Caution enough to avoid,

Let us in the next Place consider a little more distinctly, how vast the Disproportion is betwixt the Gain of the whole World and the Loss of one's own Soul.

And in truth, so very discernible is the Disproportion between them, that, let any Man but make the Case his own, and the Danger present to himself, and he would, without any Deliberation, choose and act, as if he were

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demonstrably convinc'd that the one is infinitely outweigh'd by the other.

Let any Man then, for Supposition sake, put himself into the Circumstances of the rich Man in the Parable, who, upon contemplating his mighty Stores, seem'd to be Master of the Extent of his own Wishes, (if not the whole World) and therefore said to himself in much Complacency, *My Soul, thou hast much Goods laid up for many Years, take thine Ease, eat, drink, and be merry.* And suppose this seemingly happy and contented Man should, immediately after this pleasing Dream, hear the startling Notice, *that in the self-same Night his Soul should be requir'd of him.* What would the deluded Wretch then think? What would he do? Would he not most readily forego all his great Abundance, and be content to be reduc'd to his original Nakedness, if upon any Terms he could but purchase a Reprieve from Death? And if by Nature's proper Instinct, the Preservation of this temporal Life be of more Concern and Value to a Man than all worldly Enjoyments besides, much, and infinitely more, must it import him to secure to himself eternal Life, how dear soever it may cost him.

But to put the Supposition still closer, let us imagine a Man to be actually in the same Condition with the rich Man in the Gospel; *when in Hell he lift up his Eyes, being in Torments,*

ments, and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his Bosom. Would he not give the World, if he had it at his Disposal, to be released from the Place of Torment he is in? Would he not, if he could be permitted to come once more upon his Trial into this World, contentedly exchange the Purple, fine Linen, and sumptuous Fare he was formerly us'd to, for the Rags and Scraps of *Lazarus*, if he might be but eas'd of the Fears of those Torments he once felt; or refresh'd with the Hopes of future Comforts? There cannot be the least Reason to doubt, but this would be any Man's Choice, if there were Room, after such sad Experience, for a second Choice.

But, notwithstanding all the Clearness of this unquestion'd Truth, Men are but too apt to overlook it in Practice, because the World is the Place of their present Habitation, and a Place that is stor'd with Variety of Objects, suited to their Senses and Appetites: Whereas Heaven and Hell are look'd upon as at a Distance, and in Futurity; and being remote from Sense, they strike the less forcibly upon their Imagination. Hence it is, that Men are so greedy to catch at any present Advantage, the very emptiest Shadow of temporal Felicity, though it be with the utmost Hazard, or at the certain Price of their everlasting Welfare.

But here let us take the following Memorandums along with us:

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First, That in all Projects of this kind, the Gain is very uncertain, but the Loss most certain and unavoidable.

It never yet was, or will be any Man's Lot (as our Saviour here for Argument's sake supposes) to gain the whole World: And it is but rarely (if ever) that any Man can get a Share big enough in it, to satisfy his own voluptuous, covetous, and ambitious Desires; for the Cravings of these Appetites are such, as will hardly admit of any Bounds: But it very often happens, that they who are most eager in such Pursuits, are miserably disappointed of their Aim. The merciless Extortioner and Oppressor, who hastens to enrich himself with the Spoils of the Poor and Helpless, frequently meets with a secret Blast, that scatters his ill-gotten Wealth faster than he can gather it. The Lovers of Pleasure frequently feed Diseases whilst they are pampering the Flesh, and *making Provision to fulfil the Lusts thereof.* The Adorers of Honour tread upon very slippery Ground, that makes their Climbing dangerous; and they are oftentimes supplanted by the Envy, or crush'd by the Power of some more fortunate Rival.

Such Uncertainties are these Men beset with in all their wordly Pursuits; and yet, whether they succeed or not, they are alike answerable before God for the Sins of Voluptuousness, Avarice, and Ambition; even when they reap little or nothing of the Fruits expected from them:

them: They are certain in the End to lose their own Souls, and that is all that they are certain of. And what an unaccountable Folly must it be for Men to traffick with a deceitful World, upon such hazardous Terms as these?

Sccondly, It deserves also to be remember'd, that the Gain at most is but inconsiderable, and what might easily enough be otherwise supplied; but the Loss is vastly great, and irreparable.

For if a Man were to be ever so successful in this World, what would the whole Sum of his imaginary Gains amount to? He could do no more than gratify his fleshly Lusts with such brutal Pleasures as carry Satiety and Loathing along with them, or perhaps please his Eye with the massy Bulk of a Heap of useless Riches, or sooth his Pride with the Pageantry of a little outward Grandeur.

And surely, the noble Empire over a Man's own Passions, the refined Pleasures of Temperance, the Ornament and Enjoyment of a meek and humble and contented Mind, as they might be had upon much easier Terms, so they must be in a true Estimate exceedingly preferable to these vain and empty Satisfaction, which never afford us any real Happiness.

We begin every Day indeed with a fresh Expectation, enter upon new Charges and Labours, as the credulous Chymist does in the

flattering Search of his Elixir; we put forward in a trembling Chace of Happiness, which some pursue so eagerly, and live so fast, as they call it, that they overtake nothing by it in the Event but an early Grave; and in a very literal Sense run themselves out of Breath. This is the Sentiment and Conduct of Men: Thus they think and thus they act; or rather, thus they dream and thus they walk in their Sleep. We are big with the Hopes of that Part of Life which is coming on, and live Day after Day upon the Fancy of what To-morrow will produce, like the Spectators of a Play, still in Expectation of the next Scene, but yet when To-morrow comes we find it just like Yesterday, vain and without Content. 'Tis in the Course of Life as when one travels in a Fog: In the very Place where we move the thin subtle Vapour seems as nothing, and is hardly visible, but at some Distance appears of so massy a Consistence that we fancy we could almost embrace it in our Arms, but yet when we arrive at that distant Place we find ourselves in the Thin again, and the phantastick Solid is remov'd from us to a further Distance. Just so the Happiness of this Life is always to come, still at some Remove from us, but never actual and present. We may have our Elysian Prospects, Dreams of Happiness, and Landships of Paradise, and we may hope that That Happiness which has hitherto been too slippery for our Hold, and like a Spectre glided thro'

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our grasping Arms, shall one Day be confin'd within the Circle of our Embraces, but we shall find, to our Cost, that our Expectations were groundless, and that *our Life*, as St. James tells us, *is but a Vapour, so soon passeth it away, and we are gone.* And therefore,

Lastly, It should above all Things be remember'd, that the Gain, set it at the very highest, is but temporal; whereas the Loss is permanent and eternal.

Let us imagine, if you please, (what was never seen) a Man to be the absolute Master of all, that is, call'd by the gilded Title of Happiness in this World; to enjoy Health, in perfect and constant Vigour; Wealth without Measure; Pleasures unrestrain'd and unallay'd; Power uncontrol'd; Honour unenvied and unrival'd; and let us imagine this unknown, unheard-of happy Man, after an uninterrupted Course of Prosperity, to have his Sun-set as glorious as his Noon; yet (alas, for that mortifying Thought) his Sun must quickly set, the whole Sum of his Years is but as a Hand-breadth, they hasten to their End *as it were a Tale that is told*, and when once his Breath goeth forth, and he returneth to his Earth, in that very Day *his Thoughts perish*: All his Possessions and Acquisitions avail him not; all his fancied Happiness, his tow'ring Conceits and grand Designs come to nothing, and are buried with him in the Dust. And lo! this is the short End of all worldly Felicity: This,

O Earth, is the certain tho' fatal Period of all thy fleeting perishable Gains.

But now, what is the Measure, what the Bounds of that Loss, which this wretched happy Man will sustain in grasping at this Shadow of Happiness? Why, he must lose his own Soul; and when that is lost, it is lost from an Eternity of transcendent Happiness into an Eternity of most insupportable Misery.

And what a sad deplorable Delusion is it, since eternal Misery must come into the Account, for Men still to purchase the transient, the momentary Satisfaction of this World at such an infinite Expence?

The Disproportion is every Way so unmeasurably great, that *it can profit a Man nothing, if he should gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul.*

I will only add, that by Parity of Reason, if a Man should lose the whole World, or all that he has in it, and suffer all the Misery that this World knows; if he could but save his own Soul he would be nothing hurt; for there is the same Disproportion still, and the Gain in that Case must be infinitely greater than the Loss can be.

And surely these Considerations are of such infinite Importance, that, if duly weigh'd, and constantly kept in mind, they must (by God's Grace) be sufficient to preserve our Integrity amidst all the Changes and Chances of this mortal

mortal Life, and to carry us unhurt through all the Temptations of this sinful World, so as that neither the Splendor of any thing that is great or goodly in our Sight, nor the Charms of any thing that is pleasing, nor the Smart of any thing that is afflicting, nor the Terror of any thing that is most formidable to Flesh and Blood, shall be able to withdraw our Eyes, or unfix our Hearts from Heaven, the Centre of our Bliss, where (and where only) true and substantial Joys are to be found, and to continue everlastingly.





ON ORIGINAL SIN.

EPHESIANS ii. 3.

And were by Nature the Children of Wrath.

THE two great Questions amongst the Philosophers of old were concerning the Origin of Evil, and the Cure of it. With regard to the first of these, Philosophy neither did, nor could go any farther than certain Rules, or moral Prescriptions; the World having then no Notion of the lapsed Condition of Man, or of the Nature and Necessity of divine Grace. As to the latter, though their general Practice of Sacrifice seems to imply, that they had some Notion of the vindictive Justice of the Deity, and that some Atonement was necessary to appease that Justice, yet they by no means came up to the Point; wherein likewise the *Jewish* Religion seems defective; for as much as the Sacrifices, with which they fattened their Altars, were infinitely disproportionate both to the God to whom, and to the End and Purpose for which they were offer'd. *It being impossible*, as the Author of the Epistle

Epistle to the *Hebrews* assures, that the Blood of Bulls and Goats should put away Sins. These two Topicks therefore, the Original of Sin, and the Atonement necessary for the Expiation of it, are Matters of great Importance, and consequently worthy our most serious Enquiry: But the present Discourse shall be confined to the former of the two, viz. the *Original of Sin*, whence and how it came into the World.

Now this may be done, first, by shewing, that Man is very much chang'd from what he was at his first Creation.

Secondly, By proving that this Alteration consists in a Corruption of Nature, derived down from our first Parents.

And, lastly, by evincing that this original Corruption has the true and formal Nature of Sin.

First then, it may be made appear that Man is very much changed from what he was at his first Creation.

The Disorder that is in Human Nature is too visible to want Revelation for the Discovery thereof: It is what hath been complained of in all Ages; but for want of Revelation, vain were all the Labours of the Curious and Inquisitive in seeking the Cause, The Opinion, which most generally prevailed, was the Doctrine of *Præexistence* of Souls; which was brought into *Italy* by *Pythagoras*; but had spread itself very far before his Time,
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and continues to this Day in the Eastern Parts of the World.

Great Defects were observ'd in all the Powers of Man; his Understanding dark, his Will weak, and yet obstinate; his Appetites irregular, and his Passions strong: And it was very rightly concluded, that so absurd a Composition could not come immediately out of the wise and pure Hands of the Creator of all Things, but must needs be a State of Punishment. But then they looked upon the Souls of Men to be of too pure, refined, and exalted a Nature, to be originally designed by God for Companions of this sinful Clod of Earth; and therefore imagined, that these Spirits had an Existence of their own before, but by some Transgressions having offended their Maker, that this Case of Flesh was so contrived on purpose as a Punishment for them.

This had the Face of a plausible Hypothesis; and so long as it seem'd to solve an apparent Difficulty its own Absurdities were overlooked: No Notice was taken of the Incongruity of Man's Creation thus by Pieces; or by God's uniting two Natures together, which they themselves supposed so unsuitable to each other; or of the unavoidable Consequence of God's being thereby the Author of Sin.

But if they had preserved the History of their own Descent, they would have known that the Body and Soul were matched together in Love, and designed by God for inseparable

parable Companions : That the noblest Creature in the visible World resulted from that Union ; the only Creature endued with Abilities to praise his Maker, and under him to have the Dominion of this Globe of Earth : That as Man came thus directly out of an almighty Hand, guided by infinite Wisdom and Goodness, it was impossible he should want any Endowments that were suitable to his Nature. For otherwise the Workmanship of God had been defective ; which is no less absurd, than impious to suppose.

If we therefore consider what Man ought to be, we shall know what Man was at his first Creation ; and to know what Man ought to be, we must consider what natural Powers God has given him. As he is a rational Creature, he is of Necessity a moral Agent ; he knows he has a Maker, whom it is his Duty to adore and serve. And as he is compounded of Flesh and Spirit, he finds in himself Powers very different in their Nature and Perfection, and that a due and regular Subordination among them is necessary to attain the Ends of his Creation, the Glory of God, and his own Happiness. Some of them are made to be governed and kept in subjection ; others for the Command over them : He has a Power of Election, by which he is Master of his own Actions, which is called the Will ; with Appetites to incline or draw it ; and when Occasion requires, Passions to divert it : And
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over all, an Understanding to preside and govern, and that to be regulated by the Law of God.

When Things are thus, Man is in the most perfect State his Nature is capable of in this World, a truly noble Creature, and worthy of his Maker. This therefore must certainly be the Condition in which God made him, otherwise, after a moral Agent was made, God could not, upon a Review of his Works, have pronounced all good; neither could he be said *to have made Man in His own Image*, notwithstanding the Spirituality and Immortality of his Soul, unless he had given him those Perfections that such a Nature requires, which are Wisdom in the Mind, and Holiness in his Will.

Now if we take a short View of the present Condition of Man, we shall soon perceive that he is very much altered from this supposed happy State; this, as our Church, in the Language of all orthodox Christians, calls it *Original Righteousness*. There is nothing of that Harmony and Order which was then in his Faculties; no Authority in the Superior, or Obedience in the Lower: But the Subjects are in Arms against their Rulers, and nothing but Civil War within this little World. The Understanding dark, the Will impotent, and the inferior Faculties taking this Opportunity to rebel; nothing but Tumults in his Breast, and a perpetual Strife for Superiority.

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Sometimes a boisterous Passion gets into the Throne, and obliges the Will to execute its wild Commands: Then a craving and importunate Lust starts up, and, like a Beggar arm'd, demands to be relieved. Counters and Bawbles, by the dimfighited Understanding, are taken for Gold and Jewels, and the Wretch in the most deplorable Poverty thinks himself rich and happy. By and by those Phantoms of Pleasure vanish, and the Mind recovers its Sight with Anguish and Amazement. Then Vengeance is denounced against the cheating Affections which have been guilty of this Imposture, and severe Discipline is threaten'd; but they being too great Favourites to be long under Displeasure, are quickly restored to a Capacity of reducing their Lord again to as insignificant Resolutions. In this Circle of Disorder and Confusion is the Life of Man hurried away, under the alternate Tyranny of his own Slaves; which is a Condition in which the Goodness of God could never have placed him, and therefore is an evident Proof of the great Change, from what he was at his first Creation. Which leads me to my second Particular, where I am to shew,

That this Alteration consists in a corrupt and depraved Nature, derived down to us from our first Parents.

When we have seen in how perfect a State Man was made, and how imperfect That, under which his Posterity has ever laboured, where

where should we look for the Cause of this great Alteration, but from that daring Sin which so fatally poisoned the Fountain from which all succeeding Generations have flowed? The Malady is too universal to be ascribed to any other Cause.

Tho' one Man, notwithstanding the great Light which God hath given him, might be over-reached by the Stratagem and Subtilty of a superior Spirit, and drawn in to rebel against his Maker: Yet that all Men of their own accord should follow such a Leader; that in all Parts of the Earth, and all Ages, infinite Millions of Men without one single Exception, should make themselves Parties in the Treason; that not one Man should be born, who would make the right Use of his Reason, is utterly inconceivable. Of this general Defection there must be some universal, natural, and internal Cause, a Bias upon our Wills and Affections, which so forcibly inclines us to Evil, that our strongest Opposition is in vain. Which we shall find also yet more evident, if we will but observe that those Defects which are so visible in our natural Powers, are most superlatively conspicuous when they are exercised about moral Actions.

'Tis true, our Mind is obscured, and our Will weak and perverse; yet, in most Cases, they serve us tolerably well. In temporal Concerns we commonly judge with great Nicety,

cety, perceive exactly where our true Interest lies, choose the proper Means to pursue it; foresee Dangers and Difficulties afar off, use the necessary Caution to guard ourselves against all Accidents, and usually have Resolution enough vigorously to follow the Dictates of our Understanding. But when Duty calls for our Watchfulness and Diligence; Virtue and Piety, for our Application; we are quite other Creatures: Our governing Powers are benumbed and asleep, and Those only active, which should be suppressed. There is a perfect Stupor upon the Mind, and the Will is refractory: The Beauty of Holiness shines in vain, nor can all the Rhetorick that is contained in those Arguments which persuade to Virtue, engage our Ear: A Crown of Life itself, put into the Balance against the emptiest Pleasure, is outweighed; and everlasting Torments have no Terror in them. So that the Darling of Mankind, Interest, in this Case has lost all its Charms, and Self-preservation ceases to be a governing Principle. Whereas in other Matters, as was observed, the Case is quite different. No Man runs into the Fire, or walks on till he drops down a Precipice which he sees before him: But in his moral Actions; infinitely greater and no less certain Dangers put him in no fear at all. A bottomless Pit is before him, yet he hastens on without Thoughts of stopping, though the Uncertainty of Life makes him always near the Brink of

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it. He treads undaunted in Paths that lead to Flames, which he believes shall never be extinguished, feeling at the same time the Worm that never dies gnawing in his Breast.

Now what Account can be given of this monstrous Stupidity, with relation to Sin only, running through a whole Race of rational Creatures? What, but the Venom of Sin itself? which from the Root of human Nature, has ever spread itself through all its Branches, and brings forth this accursed Fruit: and this appeared as early as was possible; for the first Man born of *Adam* was a Murderer, as soon as there was a second for him to kill.

The Scripture is very clear in this Matter: I shall instance only in one Particular; *Gen. v. 3.* We are told, that *Adam begat a Son in his own Likeness, after his Image, and called his Name Seth.* By which nothing can be meant, but that he was begot with such a corrupt and depraved Nature as his Father's. For there was no need, certainly, that the Holy Ghost should observe to us, that *Adam begat a Son like himself* in his essential Properties and outward Figure, which was no more than what was common to all Creatures. Besides, if this had been the Meaning of it, the Observation no doubt had been most proper upon the Birth of his first Son: But since the Design of God was to let us know that Corruption was entailed upon the Children
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of *Adam*, it was reserved till *that Son* was born, in whose Posterity the Species was to be preserved, and That was *Seth*, from whom *Noah* lineally descended. And that this Meaning of the Words might not be overlook'd, there is an emphatical Repetition of the same thing, *Adam begat a Son in his own Likeness, after his Image*; and this introduced, by calling to our Remembrance, that *Adam* himself was made *in the Image of God*, ver. 1. Which had been utterly needless, unless by the Antithesis, to shew the great Difference between the Image in which *Adam* was made, and that after which *Seth* was begotten: And that as *Adam's* Likeness to God lay chiefly in his moral Qualities, the Wisdom of his Mind and Holiness of his Will: So the *Image of Adam* in *Seth* denoteth the inherent and hereditary Depravation of both in him. 'Tis evident also, that *St. Paul* takes the *Image of Adam* in this Sense, when he says, *The first Man is of the Earth, earthy, the second Man is the Lord from Heaven: And as we have born the Image of the earthy, we shall also bear the Image of the heavenly.*

Thirdly, I am now to shew, that this original Corruption in us has the true and formal Nature of Sin.

Whatsoever wants that Symmetry, or any way deviates from that regular Order in which God made it, is in its kind evil. And as when Nature is obstructed in its ordinary

Method of working, the Production is monstrous, and by its natural Irregularity odious to all Beholders ; so when a rational Creature is defective in any moral Qualities which belong to his Nature, he becomes morally evil, and odious in the pure Eyes of God. *Adam*, before his Fall, by reason of his *original Righteousness*, was such a Creature as Man ought to be, and therefore the just Object of God's Love and Favour ; as all his Children would have been, had he kept his Integrity, and they been born in his *righteous Image* : But he falling, and they being born in the Image of their lapsed Progenitor, that is with Dispositions in their Nature quite contrary to the Will of God, are such Creatures as Man ought not to be, and consequently are just Objects of God's Hatred and Displeasure. God *requires Truth in the inward Parts*, as *David* observes : And therefore if there be Error in the Understanding with regard to our Duty, Disobedience in the Will, or Irregularity in the Affections, it is not material to enquire how they came there, whether contracted by evil Customs, or born with us : They are evidently a Transgression of the Law, and therefore have the true and formal Nature of Sin.

And accordingly we find this original Corruption of Man's Nature represented as such in Scripture under great Variety of Expressions ; but especially by *St. Paul*, whose proper

per Province it was, as Apostle to the *Gentiles*, to encourage these, and humble the proud presumptive *Jews*; by shewing that though the latter were for some time particularly favoured by God, and were his chosen People, yet by Nature they and the *Gentiles* were the same sinful Creatures, were all by Nature the Children of Wrath, and equally stood in need of a Redeemer.

He tells them therefore, that *all the World was become guilty before God*; that all Men, *Jews and Gentiles, were under Sin, under Condemnation, shut up together under Sin*; that *all had sinned and come short of the Glory of God*. Which Propositions being all universal, and no Exception made as to those who die before they commit actual Sin, it is evident the Apostle must mean principally the *original* Pollution of their Natures, by which they are truly Sinners, and liable to the Wrath of God, as is more expressly declared by him, when he tells us, *That we are by Nature the Children of Wrath*.

Now the Punishment of *Adam's* Sin having reached all Men, is a Demonstration that the Guilt of it has done so too. It has reached such as cannot sin actually, even Infants; and yet the very Reason which the Apostle gives, why Death has passed upon all Men, is, *because all have sinned*. From *Adam* to *Moses* there was no positive Law enforced by the Penalty of Death, nevertheless, saith St. Paul,

Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them who had not sinned after the Similitude of Adam's Transgression, who is the Figure of him that is to come. Since then by their own Sins they had not incurred the Penalty of Death, and indeed could not, because there was no such Punishment threatened; nothing can be plainer, than that their Death was the Punishment of *Adam's Sin*, in which by Nature they were all Partakers.

But you may ask perhaps, How is it possible that the Transgression of one Man, many Ages ago, can have any Influence upon us of the present Generation? His Crime was personal, and might pollute his own Nature indeed, but tell us how is it conceivable it should infect all his Posterity? I shall answer this Question by another. Tell me first whence comes it that we every Day see so strong a Resemblance between Children and their Parents, not only in the Lineaments of their Face or Gestures of their Body, but in the most signal and reigning Qualities of their Mind? Nay even the nicer Particularities of Mens very Humours, are often seen in those who lost their Parents before they were capable of Imitation. This (reason upon it as we will) being matter of Fact, it plainly follows that the Derivation of our very Beings from our Parents is as great a Mystery, and as difficult to be accounted for, as that of our Pollution. 'Tis enough we have all the Evidence the thing is capable of.

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The Matter of Fact is too apparent to be denied, the vainest Man must acknowledge he feels it in himself, and the most charitable, alas, cannot overlook it in others. The Cause of it we learn from Scripture, and there too the Remedy against it is pointed out. Let us not then busy ourselves with fruitless Speculations concerning the Operation of that Cause, but by a more profitable Application endeavour to make the Remedy effectual: So shall we draw Happiness out of Misery, and be Gainers by the Loss of Paradise.

But you may still object farther perhaps, that allowing some hereditary Corruption flowing down to us from *Adam*, it cannot surely have the Nature of Sin in it, because entirely unavoidable and involuntary in us.

Suppose we allow then that this hereditary Distemper of Nature, this innate Disposition to Ill be involuntary; yet you must own 'tis sinful notwithstanding. For consider this, that our outward Actions owe all their Iniquity to the Sinfulness of these inward Dispositions of the Heart; for if these were not in themselves criminal, our Compliance with them in our outward Actions could never be a Crime. And as to the other Objection, that 'tis unavoidable in us; 'tis certainly true, but that does not alter the Nature of the Thing. It being contrary to the Law of God makes it Sin, tho' the Unavoidableness of it makes a great Difference between it and actual Sin; and there is no less

Difference in God's Proceedings about them. The one calls down Vengeance, the other Compassion from Heaven. Actual Sin cast the rebellious Angels into outer Darknefs : Original Sin brought down Christ from the Realms of Light to deliver fallen Man from the Power of that Darknefs.

Thus I hope it fully appears, that the Doctrine of original Sin is not only true, and clearly supported by Scripture, but a fundamental Article of the Christian Faith, upon which the Gospel Dispensation is built, it being the very Cause of God's sending his Son to take our Nature upon him. And how much soever the original Sin of Man may by some be represented as a Reproach to his Maker, and the Oeconomy of his Redemption not only denied, but ridiculed by others : Yet if you please to employ your Meditations upon them for a Moment or two, it will appear that the Creation of Man in these Circumstances, is more for the Glory of God than all his other Works.

The Glory of God is only the Manifestation of Himself ; so that the more of his Nature and Attributes is discovered, the farther is his Glory spread. His Happiness consists in his own infinite Perfections ; but till intelligent Creatures were made capable of discerning them in his Works, his Glory lay conceal'd. Now every Thing in the Creation
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manifested God's Wisdom and Power, and the Abuse of that Liberty which was necessary to constitute moral Agents, made way for his Holiness and vindictive Justice to appear: Adorable indeed, but dreadful Attributes without Mercy. Now there was no room for Mercy to shew itself, till the Creature was made, whose Sin descending to his Offspring was inseparably attended with Misfortune. Here began the fatherly Tenderness and Pity of God to display itself; for till there was an unfortunate Creature in the World, there was no proper Object of the divine Compassion. Human Pity, indeed, reaches to all the Miserable, though they are so by their own Choice; but this is a Weakness, which however becomes us, on account of the common Infirmities and Calamities from which none of us are exempted. But God is out of the reach of such a Consideration, and his Compassion can have no Mixture of Weakness and Imperfection; but must be suitable to the Majesty of Heaven, and exert itself without any Diminution of his other Attributes: The Authority of his Laws must be vindicated, his Justice satisfied, as well as his Mercy gratified.

By the Creation of Man therefore in such Circumstances, what a bright Scene of God's Glory is before our Eyes! The greatest Good is brought out of the greatest Evil, and the whole Deity (if we may so speak) concern'd
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in it. There is no Jarring between his Justice and Mercy: The former presents itself before us in all its Terror, the latter shining out in its full Glory: *Thus Mercy and Truth have met together, Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other.*

Then as for the Honour of God's Laws and Government, what could more fully vindicate that, or better demonstrate his Hatred and Detestation of Sin, than a bleeding Son expiring under the Punishment of it? And how could the Love of God appear more triumphantly, than by that Son's bearing our Burden, and the Father's laying that Burden upon one that was so mighty.

Come then and behold the Mystery of Godliness, which Angels themselves, though unconcerned in the Benefits, gaze upon with Admiration! while many of the depraved Sons of *Adam* are labouring to dispute their *Saviour* out of the Value of his Blood, and themselves out of their Salvation by it. Perverse Men! who will not own the Derivation of any Guilt from their Forefather, when they are copying his very Sin in the Pride and Infidelity of it! Doth not the plainest Scripture stare them in the Face, and tell them, that *as by one Man's Disobedience many became Sinners, so by the Obedience of One many shall be made Righteous; That as in Adam all died, so in Christ shall all be made alive?*

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Let us therefore be earnest with the Almighty, that we may all in this our Day discern these Things which so much belong to our Peace : That he will kindle in our Hearts the most ardent Affection for our blessed Lord, who endured such bitter Sufferings to redeem us from the Power of Sin and Death ; and that this Flame of Love may shine forth in all the Branches of an entire and sincere Obedience : So shall We condemned Criminals on whom the Sentence of Death had passed, be Partakers in the Triumphs of the Cross, and reign with our blessed Redeemer for ever,

To whom, &c.



On

On Man as altogether Vanity.

PSALM xxxix. 5.

*Verily every Man in his best Estate is altogether
Vanity.*

AS in Nature those Things which are most necessary for the Life of Man, and which conduce most to the Comfort and Conveniency of his Being, are the most common and the most easily to be attain'd ; so in Religion those Truths, which are the most useful and necessary to his spiritual Welfare, which are the chief Foundations of his Virtue, and have the greatest Influence on his Conduct, are the most obvious, plain, and readily attainable. But as it generally happens in Nature, that we are too apt to overlook and despise the most necessary Things, merely because they are common and of easy Purchase, whilst we admire and pursue dear-bought Trifles, so likewise do we behave in Religion. We employ ourselves about nice and curious Speculations, and are busy'd in finding out disputable Points and resolving subtle Questions, which serve more to entertain the Fancy than improve the Mind,
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and in the mean time neglect those common Truths which are absolutely requisite to all the Ends of Religion.

The Truth exhibited in the Text is what every Man ought to be acquainted with, because, next to the Knowledge of God, the Knowledge of ourselves is the most useful and necessary: And yet, I fear, there are but few who know and consider this rightly, so as to live at least as if they knew it; there are many indeed who can talk finely of the Vanity of Man, and descant largely on the Indigencies of human Nature, whilst their Practice gives the Lye to what they profess with their Mouths, and discovers what a slight Hold this pretended Knowledge has of them.

I shall therefore endeavour, in the following Discourse, to set this great Truth before you in such a Light, as may work in us that deep and operative Conviction which may influence our Faith, and regulate our Conduct in the World.

Verily every Man in his best Estate is altogether Vanity. The Word *Vanity* signifies an earthly Vapour, and is generally made use of to denote those Things which are the most empty and delusive. Thus Idols are frequently call'd by that Name, as they are Nothing in respect of what is attributed to them by those that worship them. And such is Man as represented in my Text: He seems to be something great, and to have something of Divinity

nity about him, but is really nothing, or less than nothing. *Vanity* likewise signifies Disquiet and Vexation; as when *Job* says, *I am made to possess Months of Vanity.* And in this Sense Man is altogether Vanity: His Days are few and evil, wherein he enjoys no full Contentment and Satisfaction, but is exercis'd with Variety of Cares and endless Troubles. *Vanity* is moreover sometimes put for Sin and Impiety, and how nearly it stands related to Man in this Sense, we need not attempt, I think, to prove. And lastly, this Word is frequently made use of to denote Frailty, Brittleness, and short Continuance: Man in this respect is likewise *Vanity*; a frail decaying short-liv'd Creature, *whose Days are consum'd in Vanity, and are as a Shadow that passeth away.*

But farther, Man is *altogether Vanity*, as the Text very emphatically expresses it: He has not only a little Mixture of *Vanity*, but is even *Vanity* itself. Man is, as it were, the Compendium of this lower World; so that there is no Degree of Frailty or Imperfection in any Creature, which is not likewise to be found in him: Nor is this proper or confin'd to a few only, but every Man is *altogether Vanity*. *Vanity* hath overspread the whole Race of Mankind, and under whatsoever Garb a Man appears in the World, and whatsoever Talents or Capacities he enjoys, he can never be exempted from this general Appellation: Take him in his *best Estate*, and even in That
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he is Vanity: It is not thus only with the Poor and Ignorant, and the Despicable, but with the Great, the Learned, and the Honourable Man, when he flourishes most in the World; when his Condition seems to be the most fixt and stable, and he plumes himself upon the Eminence of his Station, set him as high as you will, even in That State he is altogether Vanity, tottering in his greatest Security, and sickning in all his Enjoyments; Vanity in the Constitution of his Body, and Vanity in the very Temper and Endowments of his Soul: Which melancholy Truth the Psalmist here ushers in with a Note of Asseveration, saying, *Verily every Man in his best Estate is altogether Vanity.*

Discourfing on these Words, I shall in the First Place prove and illustrate the Truth of this Doctrine. And,

Secondly, shall shew what Effects the Consideration of it ought to have upon our Life and Behaviour.

First, Now the Truth of it is so apparent that there is little or no Occasion of a solemn Proof; it is sufficiently confirm'd by every Day's Experience, there being none who can boast an Exemption from Misery and Vice.

Some indeed are confident enough to plead for an absolute and perfect Righteousness, and others weak enough to entertain Dreams of consummate Happiness, who think if they could but obtain such and such Enjoyments, they

they then should be as happy as their Hearts could wish. But who can say he is pure from Sin? Who can say he knows not Sorrow? Not even *Solomon* in all his Glory. This Truth therefore needs not so much to be demonstrated as to be illustrated and apply'd; to be set before Men in such a clear Light, as may awaken their Attention, and direct their Practice.

Man in his first Creation was pure and holy, Master of all Perfections both of Mind and Body; for tho' he had the Principles of Corruption and Dissolution in his Frame, yet he had been exempted from Sufferings and Death by virtue of God's Covenant, if he had continued therein: But when by Transgression he forfeited those Privileges, fell from Fellowship with his God and the right Use of his Creatures, he then subjected himself and all his Posterity to Sin, Vanity, Pain, and Decay. So that since the Fall, Vanity is natural to us, and is become the very Definition of our kind: *What is Man*, saith the Psalmist? *Man is like a Thing of nought, and his Time passeth away like a Shadow.*

And this we may be fully convinc'd of, if we take a further View of Man either in Nature or Society, in his lowest or most exalted Condition, in the Improvement of his Mind, or the Enjoyments of Sense.

If we consider then, in the first Place, those Parts we are made up of, either Body
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or Soul, we shall soon find ourselves to be altogether Vanity. The Body, tho' of a goodly Structure, well contriv'd and curiously fram'd by its wise Creator, yet is compounded of base Materials, and is nothing but a House of Clay: Whatever Varnish or Lustre is cast upon it, 'tis still nothing but a painted Sepulchre, full of Corruption and Decay within, which soon appears when once the Soul is dislodg'd. What is all its Beauty but the Appearance of a Thing which a common Disease will easily efface, or the running of a few Years destroy the Fashion of? To how many Evils is it continually subject? To Cold and Heat, Hunger and Thirst, Weariness and Pain, 'till at last a Fly or a Crumb stops its Wheels, or a few Days Sickness lays all its Honours in the Dust. Those of the Beauteous, the Rich, and the Mighty, are no less frail than those of the Poor and Despicable. *The Voice said, cry. And he said, what shall I cry? All Flesh is Grass, and all the Goodliness thereof is as the Flower of the Field. The Grass withereth, the Flower fadeth.* If there be any Difference it is only this, that the fair and the wealthy appear a little more gay; they are the Flower of the Grass, but are frequently more fading, and decay sooner than others, as the Flower often falls before the Grass is cut down. Or if we consider Men in Societies, Towns, and Cities, how often are Multitudes of them swept away by the overflowing Scourge of Famine and Pestilence,

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when neither their Wealth nor their Power could secure them from the Wrath of the Almighty?

As the Body of Man is Vanity, his Soul is so likewise; for tho' in its Original Formation it was truly noble, fram'd to entertain a Fellowship and Communion with its Maker, and endu'd with Faculties suited to attain it, yet since by the Trespas of our first Parents it is fallen from its Excellency, Man even in that Respect is now *altogether Vanity*. He who was made a little lower than the Angels, is become a Slave to the Body, to provide not only for its Necessities, but its vicious Appetites likewise: It is taken up with vain Projects, and busied with unprofitable Cares, disorder'd and restless, tofs'd and disquieted by various Passions, distracted between contrary Ends and Interests, ever seeking Happiness in the Enjoyments of this World, and ever missing what it seeks. Neither is this the Case of the Soul, in a State of Ignorance and Darkness only; but if we likewise examine it in all its Pride and Glory, and consider its most excellent Capacities and Acquirements, we shall be still forc'd to the same Acknowledgment. That which passeth with great Pomp under the Title of Learning and Science, is commonly nothing more than a Rhapsody of hard Words and unmeaning Terms, which have nothing in them that can acquaint us with the internal Nature of Things: Nay, even Wisdom

dom itself, that most boasted Talent, is so far from exalting the Soul above Imperfection, that even in that *best Estate* it is *altogether Vanity*. Even in Paradise, where it was independent of Appetite, and uncontrol'd by Prejudice, and enjoy'd a greater Freedom and Power of Conduct than ever it could acquire or pretend to since, yet even then it fail'd in its Direction; and if we survey the Scene of Things as they are exhibited at present, we shall meet with stronger Marks of its Weakness and Insufficiency. What generally passes for Wisdom in the World, is so far from giving us any desirable Knowledge, that it only serves to convince us of our thorough Want of it, and to discover to us both the Ignorance and Indigence of our Nature.

In short the acquiring of Learning, and what is call'd Knowledge, serve only to distract the Mind, weary out the Spirits, and impair the Health; and after all this Drudgery we are forc'd at last to shut up every thing in Doubt and Obscurity. The utmost Reach our most labour'd Researches can carry us to, is to let us know how little can be known, to perceive more readily the Faults and Imperfections of others, and to be more severely sensible of our own: So that although human Knowledge and Learning is the most excellent temporal Good, and the most valuable Ornament of the Mind of Man, yet even this is fill'd with Vanity, and destitute of Satisfaction.

And as Man is *Vanity* both in the Constitution of his Body, and the Endowments of his Mind, he is *Vanity* likewise in all his Pursuits and Enjoyments; the Truth of which will appear but too plain from a brief Consideration of those Possessions and Pleasures which we principally pursue and are fond of in the World. And such I take the following Particulars to be,

First, Wealth.

Secondly, Power.

Thirdly, Sensual Delights and Grandeur.

And Fourthly, Life itself, and a long Continuance therein.

These are all reckon'd very desirable Blessings; and indeed so they are, if enjoy'd with Prudence and Humility; but still there is some Defect in every one of them, and their very Perfections are all mutable, and must soon have an End.

First, As to Wealth, that Idol of Mankind, it must either be hoarded up and manag'd for Increase, or else laid out on the Pomp and Pleasures of Life.

In the former of these it is hard to conceive how a Man can be the happier for it; for how can any one be the better for that which he does not make use of? A Thing that we can do nothing with, be it ever so valuable in itself, is only troublesom, unprofitable Lumber. So that the Miser, by wanting as well what he has, as what he has not, is render'd
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but the more unhappy, by the Increase of his Cares and Apprehensions. It appears therefore that Riches join'd with Covetousness can never make us happy; let us suppose them therefore laid out in a voluptuous Life.

Now if we are prudent and moderate in the Gratification of our Appetites, the Pleasure then consists in laying a Check on our Desires, otherwise our Indulgences will soon become disagreeable to us, and the Excess and Repetition of them will yield us nothing but Anguish and Remorse.

No doubt but it is good for a Man to enjoy Pleasure in his Life. There are many innocent Diversions and Amusements which both strengthen the Body and refresh the Mind, but then we must remember that nothing recommends them so much as the moderate Use of them; and this may be acquir'd without any great Abundance of Wealth and Possessions. If Money indeed could purchase new Senses, or enlarge the old ones, then indeed the rich Man might glory in his Bags. But alas! it is quite the contrary, the great Indulgence it affords him only enfeebles and destroys his natural Appetites: Intemperance, instead of strengthening Nature, overlays and oppresses it, and like a Lamp is extinguished by a too liberal Supply. All the voluptuous Man's Joy therefore is as the crackling of Thorns, and that Morsel which was sweet in the Mouth proves Bitterness in the Belly.

Thus much for the Vanity and Imperfection of Riches. But we have nobler Designs to boast of perhaps. Power and Honour are what we have in View ; and sure 'tis Godlike to be great ! Power indeed, when exercised with Justice ; and Honour, when founded upon Merit, have something noble and shining in them. But alas ! when we consider how slippery and instable those lofty Seats are ; how often the Mighty fall from those dazzling Pinnacles of Honour : How frequently the Favourites of Princes and Darlings of a Court are made the Hissing of a Crowd and Sacrifice of the Populace. If we consider how much more happy it is to be an humble Shrub than one of the lofty Cedars of *Libanus* (especially when Storms arise,) no one would covet the mighty Privilege of Rule, nor envy another his Place of Power. It is a much easier Province to obey quietly, than to command well. Thus we see that Power may become deficient, Honour contemptible, and Authority and Dominion find a Period.

In the next place, if we examine the Perfection of secular Grandeur and Magnificence, we shall find, that those gaudy Trifles only impose on the Fancy of their vain Admirers, and give more Satisfaction to the gazing Spectator than to the real Owner. After once a Man has seen and a very little Time enjoy'd his magnificent Buildings, splendid Equipage, and rich Attire, his Appetite grows pall'd, his
Admiration

Admiration ceases, and all his Contrivance and Expence is first lost to himself. Besides, when we gaze at the great Man's Purple and fine Linen, the fret Work, Carvings and Paintings which adorn his Palace; the Delicacies with which his Table is every Day spread, and all the other Fopperies and Gewgaws of Fashion, which the unthinking Multitude so much admire at a distance; we may be assured that amidst all this Lustre and Shew, he hath his Cares and Inquietudes, his Crosses and Disappointments, equal to the meanest undistinguish'd Peasant. Sloth and Excess, as they are the Privileges of a gay Fortune, so are they often the Sources of innumerable Diseases, which Men of a lower Rank and industrious Occupations never feel the Anguish of. And I believe every one has experienced what a small Share of Pain or inward Disquiet is capable of allaying the Pleasure, and taking off the Satisfaction of Grandeur and Pomp.

Thus *Solomon's* Remark is in all Respects true: *As Goods increase, says he, they also increase that eat them, and what Advantage is there to the Owners thereof, except beholding them with their Eyes? This also is Vanity.*

In the last place, even Life itself, this dear and beloved Life of ours, with all its Advantages of Beauty, Strength, and Vigour, is destitute of Perfection, and is only as a Shadow that passeth away. It often fails us when we

are the most confident of its Blessings and Continuance, and all its most excellent and desirable Accomplishments cannot prevent one Moment the Arrest of Death, or secure us from going down into the silent Chambers of the Grave. The greatest Heroes and Potentates of the Earth, whom for a while we see carried upon the Wings of Fame, sporting themselves on the giddy Billows of Fortune, and cantoning out new Empires and Dominions for themselves, are in one Moment consum'd by a single Blast of the Almighty's Displeasure; and those who look'd so much like Gods before, we now see *die like Men, and fall like one of the Princes.*

Thus doth *every Man walk in a vain Shew*, labouring for very Vanity, and perplexing and disquieting themselves in vain. We are capable of forming to ourselves Notions of much greater Happiness than we ever experience, and are therefore commonly employ'd in such Pursuits of it as Death only can convince us are fruitless and vain. We are continually delivered over from Hope to Hope, and from one vain Expectation to another: Were but this Evil remov'd, were but this Difficulty conquer'd, then we should be happy; but still as these go off, new Evils and new Difficulties instantly arise. Such are the common Cheats we put upon ourselves, in order to make the Burden of Life sit light upon us; and thus Life glides away from us, before we are resolved

solved where to pitch our Tents: So that few or none are able to say, in any part of their Journey, *It is good for us to be here.*

And is this then the sole End and Intention of our Beings? Did we come into the World only to struggle with Misfortunes, make our way through the Crowd and so go out of it again: Must we for ever wander on in this Labyrinth of Vanity without one Beam of Light to direct us, or any Clue to disentangle ourselves with? No, vain and wretched as we are, our merciful Creator hath had respect unto us, and in his only begotten Son hath sent us a great and safe Conductor. Christ hath purchased for us, if we will accept the Favour, a full and perfect Redemption from all Vanity, Sin, and Misery. He hath retriev'd our once desperate Fortune, and set up again our broken and bankrupt Nature. He hath remov'd the Guardian Sword from the Gate of Paradise, and put Happiness once more in our reach.

And tho' by a View of our natural State and Abilities, we have a melancholy and disquieting Prospect of ourselves, yet we find that the commanding Voice of the eternal Word hath from this Gloom bid Comfort arise, as at the first Creation it did Light out of Darkness.

A new Covenant is made with us agreeable to the present Frailty and Defects of our Nature. Wherein an unfinning Obedience is not exacted from us, but even an imperfect one,
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if sincere will be accepted. And if in this our weak and tottering Condition, we should fall even from that, we have an almighty assisting Hand to raise us up again. Thus all our Vanity is expiated, our Weakness supported, and our Nature perfected in every thing that is virtuous and honourable. And, as the Apostle says, *We are in all things more than Conquerors, being strenghten'd with Might, by his Spirit in the inward Man.*

Let us therefore continually reflect, that tho' we are nothing ourselves, yet that our Saviour hath undertaken to assist us, and that he is all in all: That tho' we are naturally weak, yet in him we may find a sufficient Succour and Defence: That tho' we are naturally blind, yet he will vouchsafe to be our Eyes and our Guide: And that tho' we are naturally Slaves to Appetite and Passion, yet if we apply to him for Redemption, he will set us free. At the same time therefore that we reflect upon our own Weakness and Insufficiency, let us have recourse to the divine Attributes that are employ'd in our Assistance. Thus shall we reap the Benefit of them all, become strong by our Maker's Strength, wise by his Wisdom, and happy by his Happiness: Which cannot but contribute very much towards our passing thro' this Scene of Vanity with Comfort, and alleviate the necessary Cares and Calamities we meet with in Life.

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And lastly were we frequently to think and reflect on the Truth, I have here endeavoured, to inculcate, it would wean us from an immoderate Affection for this Life, and make us aspire with a warmer Vigour after a better; it would make us despise, and get above the worthless Enjoyments of this State, which in their greatest Plenty can give no true Satisfaction, and in their greatest seeming Certainty take themselves Wings and fly away. It would animate us with Diligence to make sure of that better State, where there is a perfect Freedom from all Evil, Vanity, and Misery: Where all Tears shall be wip'd away from our Eyes, and all the Causes of them remov'd from our Perception. Where there are no Infirmities or Imperfections, but a perfect Health and Soundness both of Body and Mind. Where the Powers and Capacities of the Soul shall be exceedingly enlarg'd, and yet all indulg'd and satisfy'd: Where we may find Joy unspeakable without any Mixture of Sorrow, Pleasure without any Mixture of Bitterness: Where Vanity shall be no more, but free and unburden'd from all its Clogs and Annoyments, we shall travel on from one Degree of Perfection to another.

On this one Account only is Life to be valued; *viz*, That we have therein an Opportunity for making sure of that better State, where our Saviour is gone before. Let us therefore pass thro' this Region of Vanity like Pilgrims

Pilgrims and Strangers who most earnestly seek a nobler Country : Let us, I say, make it the chief End and Design of this Life, to prepare us for another ; constantly reaching out unto the Things that are before, without being let or hinder'd by the Things of this World, the Fashion of which passeth away and the Lust thereof. In a word, *Let us by patient Continuance in well-doing seek for Glory, Honour, and Immortality* ; that after this Scene of Vanity and Frailty is over, we may obtain that eternal Crown of Righteousness, which our blessed Saviour hath laid up for them that love him ; and will certainly bestow it on them at his second and more glorious Coming.

To thee therefore, O eternal Son of God, thou great Friend and Lover of Mankind, To thee who hast overcome the Sharpness of Death, and instead of this vain and unsatisfactory Being has provided for us Mansions in the Kingdom of Heaven, To thee with the Father and the holy Spirit be given in Heaven and Earth all Glory and Praise for ever and ever. *Amen.*





On Godliness, as profitable unto all Things.

I TIMOTHY iv. 8.

Godliness is profitable unto all Things, having a Promise of the Life that now is, and that which is to come.

THERE is nothing more unaccountable to a considering Mind, than that among all those several Exercises that seem by Providence to have been design'd as the Employ of Man, this of Godliness should be in so great a measure neglected: That Men should be so diligent, so industrious, so unwearied, some in getting Estates, others in purveying for Pleasure, others in learning Arts and Trades, all in some thing or other relating to this sensible World, and yet so few should study to acquaint themselves with God, and the Concernments of their Souls, to learn the Arts of Virtue and religious Conversation.

If there can any Account be given of this Matter, I suppose it must be some such as this, that the Things of this World, upon which we bestow our Care, our Time, our Courtship,

Courtship, are present to us. We see them every Day before our Eyes, we taste, we feel the Sweetness of them; we are sensible that the Enjoyment of them is absolutely necessary to our well Being: But as for spiritual Matters they lie under a great Disadvantage; they appear to us at a great Distance; we do not apprehend any present Need we have for them, nor do we fancy any Sweetness or Relish in them; nay, on the contrary, we form the most frightful and dismal Images of them that can be; we look upon them not only as flat and unsavoury, but as Things which if we trouble our Heads too much about, will certainly ruin all our Designs in this World: We think Religion serves only to spoil good Company; to make us melancholy and mopish, to distract us in our Business and Employments, and to put so many Restraints upon us that we can neither with that Freedom nor Success pursue our temporal Concernments, which we think necessary to our Happiness in this World.

But let us suppose Things to be thus with Religion as we have fancied, yet cannot this be any reasonable Excuse for our Carelessness about it? What tho' there were no visible Benefit by a religious Life in this World? What tho' the Rewards of our Pains about it were only in Reversion? Yet since a Time will come when it will be our greatest Interest to have been heartily religious, is it not a Madness now to neglect

neglect it? What tho' Religion be a course of Life difficult and unpleasant; a Way strewed with Thorns and Briers; a Way, which if we follow, we are certainly lost, as to our Hopes here? Yet since the Time will surely come, when we shall wish that we had been good Christians, though we had lost our right Eyes and our right Hands upon the Condition; when we shall wish that we had purchased Virtue, tho' at the Rate of the Loss of the whole World; for God's sake why should we not be of the same Mind now? Who but Fools and Children will not look upon That which shall certainly and unavoidably be, with the same Regard as if it was now present?

But indeed this is not the Case of Religion; this Business of Piety is not so formidable as we often represent it. It is no such Enemy to our temporal Designs. It is a very innocent Thing, and will do us no Harm; though we look no farther than this present World. It will hinder none of our Delights and Pleasures, but will allow us to gratify every Appetite that God and Nature hath put into us.

Since this is the Case then, how much more childish than Children shall we appear, if we make so little reckoning of it? How inexcusably foolish shall we be, if we will not be at some pains to possess ourselves of That, which will be no manner of Hindrance to our Affairs in this World, and will infallibly make us happy in that which is to come? But

But farther; What if it be certain, that a Life of strict Virtue is not only no Hindrance to our temporal Designs, but a great Furtherance of them? What if it can be prov'd, that besides the Influence it has on our Happiness in the next Life, it is also the best thing in the World to serve our Turns in this World? And that nothing can contribute so much to the bringing about our worldly Aims, no such ready way to attain to what our Flesh and Blood most desires, most delights in, as to be sincerely pious? What imaginable Pretence can we then have for our Contempt of God and Virtue? If this can be made to appear, sure all Objections will be fully answered; all Scruples satisfied; and all Prejudices against Religion wholly remov'd; and every one that is not bereft of his Fortune and of his Senses, as well as his Reason, must think himself concerned to become a Votary to it; since he can have no Temptation or Motive to Vice which will not more powerfully draw him to Virtue, and all the Ends that the one can pretend to serve, will much more effectually be served by the other; and since the good Christian not only escapes an Eternity of Misery, but has the true Promises of everlasting Life.

I think it therefore worth the while to spend the Time now allotted me, in making good this Point, and discovering something at least of that universal Profitableness of Godliness to
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the Purposes of human Life, that St. Paul in my Text assures us of.

But because the Studies of Men are so infinitely various, and the Ends of Life to be served so many, that it will be impossible to speak particularly of them; it will be needful to pitch upon some general Heads, such as, if they do not comprehend all, may yet take in most of those Things, to which the Labours and Endeavours of Mankind are directed, and in the Acquisition of which they have compassed their Designs; and to shew the Serviceableness of Religion above all other Means for the attaining of them. And I think I cannot take into Consideration any thing more to our Purpose than those three noted Idols of the World, *Wealth* and *Honour* and *Pleasure*; these being the Goods which have always been accounted to divide Mankind among them; and into the Service of some or all of which, all that set up for a happy Life in this World inlist themselves, how different and disagreeing soever they may be from one another as to their particular Employments and ways of Living. I shall therefore make it appear that Godliness and Religion is a very great Furtherance to the Acquisition of all these; and that no Man can take a more ready way, either to improve his Fortune, or purchase a Name and Reputation among Men, or to live comfortably and pleasantly in this World, than

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heartily

heartily to serve God, and to live in the Practice of every Virtue. And

In the first Place, so far as the getting of Riches depends upon human Endeavours ; so far as it is an Art, and falls under Precepts and Directions ; no Man alive can propose a better Expedient in order thereto than a serious Practice of Religion.

For first, it will be easy to shew that This above all things tends to make a Man wise and prudent, skilful and dextrous in the Management of his Affairs of what Nature soever: Forasmuch as it clears and improves a Man's Understanding, not only by the natural Efficacy it hath (as I shall shew hereafter) to purify the Blood and Spirits, upon which the Perfection of our intellectual Operations depends ; but also by dispelling those adventitious Clouds that arise in the discerning Faculty, from the noisom Fumes of Lust and Passion: All Vice in the very Nature of it, depraves and distorts a Man's Judgment, fills our Minds with Prejudices, and false Apprehensions of Things ; and no Man that is under the Dominion of it can possibly have such a free use of his Reason as otherwise he might ; for he will commonly see things, not as they are in themselves, but in those Disguises and false Colours which his Passion puts upon them : Upon which Account he cannot avoid the being often imposed upon, and committing
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a thousand Errors in the Management of his Affairs, which the virtuous Man, whose Reason is pure and untainted, is secured from. It cannot be imagined that either he should foresee Events so clearly, or spy Opportunities so sagaciously, or weigh Things so impartially, or deliberate so calmly, or transact so cautiously, as the Man that is free from those manifold Prepossessions which his Mind is fraught with. We see this every Day verified in Men of all Ranks and Conditions, of all Callings and Employments. What a Multitude of Inconveniencies as to matter of dealing between Man and Man, doth an intemperate Appetite betray Men to? How silly and foolish is the most shrewd Man when overcome with Wine? There is no one so simple in his Company, but supposing him sober, and to have Designs upon him, may easily overreach him. What a World of Advantages doth the angry Man give to him he deals with, by the Hastiness and Impatience of his Spirit?

It is thus more or less with all kind of Vices, they make crazy a Man's Head, and cast a Mist before his Eyes, and make him often lose himself in those very Ways wherein he pretends to be most skilful: So that it cannot be deny'd that Virtue is of a singular Use in all Matters wherein we have Occasion to make use of our Reason, and secures us from a Multitude of Indiscretions, which without it we should unavoidably commit, But,

Secondly, Godliness is also an excellent Means to secure a Man's Diligence in the Discharge of his Calling and Employment, which is also a Matter of very great Consequence in order to our thriving in the World, for *it is the diligent Hand that maketh rich, and the Man that is diligent in his Business, that shall stand before Kings*, as Solomon tells us.

Now the Obligations that Religion layeth upon us to be careful in this Point, are far stronger than what can arise from any other Respect or Consideration whatsoever: For it obliges us to mind our Business, not only for our own but for God's sake: It chargeth the Matter upon our Consciences, and represents it to us as a Part of that Service we owe our Creator; and upon the due Performance of which, no less than the everlasting Welfare of our Souls depends; for it assures us, that he that will call us to Account for every idle Word, will much more do so for the idle Expence of our Time, and the Abuse and Non-Improvements of those Talents which he hath intrusted us with. So that tho' we had no worldly Inducements to make us diligent in our Callings, tho' we were sure we should suffer no Prejudice in our temporal Affairs by Idleness, and the Neglect of our Business, (the fear of which is the only Principle that puts worldly Men upon Action) nevertheless we are infinitely concern'd not to be slack or negligent in this Matter, in regard it is a Point that

that will be so severely exacted of us in the other World.

I know but one Objection that can be made against this Point, and it is this, that what Engagements soever Religion lays upon us to the careful spending of our Time, yet its own Exercises, Prayer, and Reading, and Meditation take up so great a Portion of it, which might be spent in the Works of our ordinary Employments, that in effect it rather hinders our Attendance on our Business than promotes it. But to this it is easily answered, that there is no Man so engaged in the World, but may, if he please, make both his Business and his Devotions consist together without prejudicing either.

They have very false Apprehensions of Religion that think it obliges us to be always on our Knees, or always poring upon some good Book: No, we do as truly serve God and perform Acts of Religion when we labour honestly in our Vocation, as when we go to Church or say our Prayers.

It is true indeed, we ought to have our Hearts in Heaven as much as possible; yet, what hinders but we may do this in the midst of our Business? No Employment so entirely engrosseth a Man's Mind, but he may find Leisure, if he please, many Times a Day to entertain good Thoughts, and lift up his Heart in Gratitude to his Creator. And this will be so far from hindring or distracting us in our

Engagements, that it will make us go about them with much more Vigour and Alacrity. But farther, I would ask any Man that makes the aforesaid Objection, supposing Religion ten times more expensive of our Time than it really is, yet whether Vice and Sin be not much more so? What a Multitude of idle Avocations from and Interruptions in our Business doth Sin daily occasion unto Men? What a Number of impertinent Discourses, unprofitable Visits, needless Points of Gallantry, long Diversions by Drink, and Play and Company, not to mention a great many other Debauches, doth it frequently engage Men in? And yet these we count no Hindrances to our Business: These we complain not of; but to spend a Quarter of that Time in some devout Exercise, this is intolerable; it wastes too much of our Time; our Occasions will not permit it. Such partial and unjust Estimators of Things are we. But to proceed.

In the third Place then, As for Frugality and good Husbandry, which is another necessary Requisite for the getting of Wealth, Religion is unquestionably the best Mistress of it in the World; for it retrenches all the Exorbitances and Wantonnesses of our Desires, and teacheth us to live after the Measures of Nature, which every body knows are little and cheap: It perfectly cuts off all those idle Expences with which Estates of other Men stand almost continually charged. The Modesty of it clothes us
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at a small Rate; and its Temperance spreads for us, tho' neat, yet a frugal Table. The Attendance it requires on our Business will not allow us to embezzle our Money in Drinking or Gaming, nor will that Purity which is inseparable from it ever let us know what the vast sinking Expences of Lewdness and Uncleaness are. In a word, it is Vice only that is the chargeable Thing; it is only Shame and Repentance that Men buy at such costly Rates. Godliness is saving and full of good Husbandry, nor has it any known or unknown Ways of spending, except it be those of Charity, which indeed, properly speaking, are not so much Expence as Usury; for Money so laid out, even in this Life often returns to us with Advantage.

The fourth and last Means I mentioned of thriving in the World, was the keeping a good Correspondence with all those in whose Power it is to hinder or promote our Affairs. This every body knows to be a prime Point in Policy, and indeed it is of a large Extent, and of continual Use. No Man can be supposed so independent on others, but that as he is some way beholden to them for all that he has, so he stands in need of their Help and Concurrence for all that he hopes for. Men do not make their Fortunes of themselves, nor grow rich by having Treasures dropt into their Laps, but they do it by the Benefit of human Society, by the mutual Assistances and good

Offices that one Man performs for another: So that whoever intends to thrive in the World, it above all things imports him so to carry himself towards all that he has any Commerce with, that they may be obliged not to deny him any of those Assistances which the Exigency of his Affairs calls for at their Hands. But now, how this should be done any other ways than by doing all those good Offices to others, which we would they should do unto us; which as our Saviour tells us is the Sum of Religion, is a very hard thing to conceive.

I hope I need say no more to convince you that Religion is the best Policy; and that the more hearty and conscientious any Man is in the Practice of it, the more likely he is to thrive and improve in the World.

So that I may now proceed to the second general Point to be spoken to, which is, The Profitableness of Religion for the attaining a Name and a good Reputation. How very much it conduceth to this Purpose will appear from these two Considerations.

First, Godliness layeth the surest Foundation for a good Name and Reputation.

Secondly, Men are generally so just to it, that it rarely misses of a good Name and Reputation.

The first is an Argument from Reason; the second, from Experience.

First, Godliness layeth the surest Foundation for a fair Reputation in the World. There are

are but two Things that can give a Man a Title to the good Opinion and Respects of Men; *viz.* the inward Worth and Dignity of his Person, and his Usefulness and Serviceableness to others. The first of these challengeth Mens Esteem, the other their Love. Now both these Qualities Religion and Virtue most eminently possess us of.

For, First, The religious Man is certainly the most worthy and excellent Person: For he of all others lives most up to the great End for which he was design'd, which is the natural Measure of the Goodness and Worth of Things. Whatever external Advantages a Man may have, yet if he be not endow'd with virtuous Qualities, he is far from having any true Worth or Excellency, and consequently cannot be a fit Object of our Praise or Esteem; because he wants that which should make him perfect and good in his kind. For it is not a comely Personage, or a long Race of famous Ancestors, or a large Revenue, or a Multitude of Servants, or many swelling Titles, or any other Thing without a Man, that speaks him a compleat Man, or makes him to be what he should be; but the right Use of his Reason, the employing his Liberty and Choice to the best Purposes, the exercising his Powers and Faculties about the fittest Objects, and in the most due Measures: These are the Things that make him excellent. Now none can be said to do this but only he that is virtuous.

But,

But, Secondly, True and unaffected Goodness seldom misses of a good Reputation in the World. How unjust to Virtue soever Men are in other Respects, yet in this they generally give it its due; wherever it appears it generally meets with Esteem and Approbation; nay, it has the good Word of many that otherwise are not over-fond of Religion: Though they have not the Grace to be good themselves, yet they rarely have the Confidence not to commend Goodness in others. Add to this, that no Man ever raised to himself a good Name in the World, but it was upon the Score of his Virtues either real or pretended. Vice has sometimes got Riches, and advanced its self into Preferments; but it never was accounted honourable in any Nation.

It must be acknowledged indeed, that it may and doth sometimes happen that vicious Men may be had in Esteem; but then it is to be considered, that it is not for their Vices that they are esteem'd, but for some good Quality or other they are eminent in. And there is no doubt, if those Men were without those Vices, their Reputation would be so far from being diminished thereby, that it would become much more considerable.

It must also be acknowledged on the other hand, that even virtuous and good Men may sometimes fail of that Esteem and Respect that their Virtue really merits: But when we
consider

consider the Cases in which this happens, it will appear to be of no Force at all for the disproving what has been now deliver'd. For it ought to be consider'd what kind of Persons those are that treat Virtue and virtuous Men thus contemptuously: We shall always find them to be the worst and the vilest of Mankind; such who have debauched the natural Principles of their Minds, have lost all the Notions and Distinctions of Good and Evil, are fallen below the Dignity of Human Nature, and have nothing to bear up themselves with but Boldness and Confidence, Drollery and Scurrility, and turning into Ridicule every Thing that is grave and serious. But it is with these as it is with the Monsters and Extravagances of Nature, they are but very few: Few in comparison of the rest of Mankind, who have wiser and truer Sentiments of Things. But if they were more numerous, no Man of Understanding would value what such Men said of him. It looks like a Crime to be commended by such Persons, and may justly occasion a Man to reflect upon his own Actions and to cry out to himself as He did of old; *What have I done that these Men speak well of me?*

I come now to the Third and last general Proposition, which is, That Virtue and Religion contribute beyond any thing to the Pleasures and Satisfactions of human Life; which Point, if it be clearly made out, I do not see what can be farther wanting to recommend it
unto

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unto us as the most effectual Instrument for our Gratification in this present Life. Now that Godliness doth indeed make the most excellent Provisions for all sorts of Pleasures will appear by these four Considerations.

First, That it eminently ministreth to Health, which is a necessary Foundation for all Pleasures.

Secondly, It increaseth the Relish and Sweetness of all our other Pleasures.

Thirdly, It secures us from all those Inquietudes and Disturbances which are apt to embitter our Pleasures, and to make our Lives uncomfortable.

Fourthly, It adds to Human Life a World of Pleasures of its own, which those that are not possessed of it are utterly unacquainted with.

But the Speaking to these Points shall (God willing) be the Subject of the next Opportunity.





On Godliness, as profitable unto all Things.

I T I M O T H Y iv. 8.

Godliness is profitable unto all Things, having the Promise of the Life that now is, and that which is to come.

WHAT a strange Authority have Mens Passions and Appetites over their Reason : And what a strange Tendency is there in our Nature to act below the Purposes of our Being. In this Age when Mens Understandings are improv'd to the uttermost, and are arriv'd to a wonderful Delicacy of thinking, yet the Direction of their Wills and Affections, and the Regulation of common Life and Practice, is sunk as low as the other is exalted. The State of Religion and the State of Learning stand at present like the two Poles of the Earth; one elevated and the other depressed. The Truth is, (tho' it be a sad one) Fineness and Irreligion make the Character of this Age, which has no Heat with its Light; but while it shines bright and radiant, feels cold and frozen, and with

with all the gay Appearances of Life, has the chillness of Death upon it, *Thou hast a Name that thou livest, and art dead.* Rev. viii. 1. Religion indeed is now become little more than Theory, Contention, Profession, and Form; Learned Men study it; those that would be Infidels dispute and cavil about it: Civil Men profess it; politic Men and Hypocrites make a great Shew and Ostentation of it; but who is it that sincerely and conscientiously practises it, and lives by its Measures? All that which is blamed in other Matters, is excused in the Matter of Religion; and 'tis only in the Affair of Salvation that Men have a Toleration for their Imprudencies, and may with the World's good Leave be Fools.

But how shall we awaken Men from this Lethargy, bring them to themselves, and recover them into their Senses? Nothing, I confess, so hard as to reclaim a vicious and a knowing Age. Immorality that proceeds from Ignorance and Darknes, may like night-walking Shades be chased away by the Light, but who shall pull a Mote out of the Eye of the Sun; and if *the Light that is in us be Darknes, how great must that Darknes be!* How then can we hope to reform such a knowing and rational Age? Why, there is one thing to be consider'd notwithstanding what has been said: That all Sin is founded on Error and wrong Reasoning of one sort or other, and implies at least

least actual, if not habitual Ignorance: The Application is still to be made to Mens Reason and Understanding (as the Part primely affected) if not to inform Them what they know not, yet at least to engage their Reflexion and Consideration upon what they do know. It was with this View I chose the Words before us: And in a former Discourse upon them I made some Enquiry into what could be the Reasons that amongst the various Exercises Mankind busied themselves in, the Business of Godliness and the Arts of Virtue and Religion were so much neglected. The Grounds of this I supposed to be the following: Because the Promises of Religion appeared to us at a distance, and the Satisfactions of the World present and sensible: Because we think Religion destructive of these present Advantages, and good for nothing but to spoil Company and make us melancholy and morose. In Answer to these Objections, I observed, that even considering Religion in this Light, yet since a Time will come when it will be our highest Interest to have been sincerely virtuous; a Time when we shall wish we had been good Christians though we had suffer'd upon the Condition, and the Reward of our Pains had been only in Reversion, that therefore we ought most certainly to be of the same Mind now. But I then asserted, that this was not indeed the Case of Religion: That it was no such formidable Thing as we
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pictur'd it to ourselves, that so far from being an Obstruction to our temporal Designs, either in the Acquisition of Wealth or Honours, it was the best Promoter of them ; and that so far from blasting our Delights in Life, it did not hinder us from gratifying any one Appetite that God and Nature had put into us, but that it contributed the most of any thing in the World to attain what we most ardently desire and most passionately delight in.

The two general Topics of Wealth and Honour I then discuss'd ; and am come now to consider the other above mention'd, and to observe in favour of Godliness, that it contributes most of any thing to the Pleasures and Satisfaction of human Life ; which Proposition, if it be clearly made out, I do not see what can be farther wanting to recommend it to us as the most effectual Instrument for our Gratification in the present World.

Now that Religion does really make the most excellent Provision for all sorts of Pleasures, will appear from the following Considerations.

First, That it most eminently ministers to Health, which is a necessary Foundation for all Pleasures.

Secondly, It much increaseth the Relish and Sweetness of all our other Pleasures.

Thirdly, It secures us from all those Inquietudes and Disturbances which are apt to embitter our Pleasures, and make our Lives uncomfortable.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, It adds to human Life a World of Pleasures of its own, which those that are not possessed of it, are utterly unacquainted with.

First, Godliness very much conduceth to Health : Which is so necessary to our Enjoyment of any sensible Good, that without it neither Riches, nor Honours, nor any thing that we esteem most gratifying to our Senses, will signify any thing at all to us. Now that a sound and healthful Constitution depends greatly upon a discreet Government and Moderation of our Appetites and Passions ; upon a sober and temperate Use of all God's Creatures, which is an essential Part of true Religion, is a thing so evident that no further Proof is necessary : For what are most of our Diseases and Infirmities, that make us miserable and unpitied while we live, and cut us off in the midst of our Days, and transmit Weakness and Disease to our Posterity, but the Effects of our Excesses and Debauches, our Revellings and Luxury ? All which Religion, and nothing but Religion, (for Sense often prevails over Reason) can restrain and secure us from. But,

Secondly, A Life of Religion very much increaseth the Relish and Sweetness of all our sensible Enjoyments : So far is it from abridging us of any of our earthly Delights (as its Enemies slanderously represent it) that it abundantly heightens them. It not only indulges

us in the free Use of all those good Creatures of God, which he hath made for the Support and Comfort of Mankind, while they are in these earthly Bodies ; but also makes them more exquisitely gratifying and delightful, than without it they could possibly be : And this it doth in part by the Means of that never-enough-commended Temperance and Moderation I spoke of before ; for hereby it comes to pass, that our Senses, which are the Instruments of our Pleasures, are always preserved in that due Purity and Quickness that is absolutely necessary for the right performing of their Offices, and the rendring our Perceptions of any thing grateful and agreeable : Whereas the sensual and voluptuous Man defeats his own Designs, and, whilst he thinks to enjoy a greater Share of Pleasures than other Men, really enjoys a less ; for his Dissoluteness and giving up the Reins to his Appetites only serve to dull and stupify them. Nor doth he reap any other Benefit from his continual hankering after bodily Pleasures, but that his Sensation of them is hereby made altogether flat and unaffecting : Neither is his Meat half so favourable, nor his Recreations so diverting, nor his Sleep so sweet, nor the Company he keeps so agreeable as theirs are, that, by following the Measures of Nature and Reason, come to them with truer, because unforced Appetites.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, Let it be farther considered, that Godlineis is a most effectual Antidote against all those Inquietudes and evil Accidents, that either wholly destroy, or very much embitter the Pleasures of this Life.

For whilst it teacheth us to place our Happiness in God and ourselves only, whilst we have learned to bring all our Affections and Passions, our Desires and Aversions, our Hopes and Fears under the Command of our Reason, and endeavour not so much to suit Things to our Wills, as our Wills to Things: Being indifferent to all Events that can happen, save only that we always judge those best which God in his Providence sends us: Being, I say, thus disposed (as certainly Religion, if it be suffered to have its perfect Work upon us, will thus dispose us) what is it that shall be able to disturb or interrupt our Pleasures, or create any Trouble or Vexation in us? Our present Enjoyments will not be embitter'd with the fear of losing them, or lessened by our impatient Longing after greater. Our Brains will not be upon the Rack for compassing things that are perhaps impossible, nor our Bodies under the Scourge of Rage and Anger for every Disappointment: We shall not look pale with Envy that our Neighbours have that which we have not, nor pine away with Grief if we should happen to lose that which we have. But the vicious Man is exposed to all these Miseries, and a thousand more, which

will perpetually fret and torment him; for he is a Slave to his Passions; and the least of them, when it is let loose upon him, is the worst of Tyrants. He is like the troubled Sea, restless and ever working, ruffled and discomposed with every thing: He is not capable of being rendered so much as tolerably happy by the best Condition this World affords: For having such a World of impetuous Desires and Appetites which must all be satisfied, or else he is miserable; and there being such a number of Circumstances, that must concur to the giving them that Satisfaction; and all these depending upon things without him, which are perfectly out of his Power, he will continually find matter to disquiet him, and render his Condition troublesome and uneasy. A thousand unforeseen Accidents will ever be crossing his Designs: Nor will there be wanting some little thing or other almost hourly to put him out of Humour.

And if this be the Case of the vicious Man in the best Circumstances of this World, (where the Causes of Vexation are in a manner undiscernible) in what a miserable Condition must he needs be under those most real Afflictions unto which human Life is obnoxious? What is there that shall be able to support his Spirit under the Tedioufness of a lingering Sickness, or the Anguish of an acute Pain? What is become of all his Mirth and
Jollity,

Jollity, if there should happen a Turn in his Fortune, if he should fall into Poverty and his Friends forsake him? Not to mention a great many more Evils, which will make him incapable of any Consolation, eat into the Heart of his best Enjoyments, and become Gall and Wormwood to his choicest Delicacies?

And what admirable Provisions hath he now made for his Pleasures? Has he not done himself a wonderful Piece of Service, by freeing himself from the Drudgery as he calls it of Virtue and Religion? Alas poor Man! this is the only Thing which would now have secured him from all these sad Accidents and Displeasures. The good Man sits above the Reach of Fortune, and in spite of all the Vicissitudes and Uncertainties of this lower World, with which other Men are continually alarm'd, enjoys a constant and undisturbed Peace. Those Evils that may be avoided, (and really a great many which afflict mortal Men are such) he by his prudent Conduct and Government of himself wholly prevents; and those that are unavoidable, he so manages that They have no Power to do him any Harm: For he is indeed possessed of that which the Alchymists in vain seek for: Such a sovereign Art he has, that he can turn the basest Metals into Gold; make such a Use of the worst Accidents that can befall him, that they shall not be accounted his Miseries, but his Enjoyments; so that however the Varieties of his Condition

may occasion a Change in his Pleasures, yet they can never cause any Loss or Destruction of Them.

And this is the Security he enjoys, not as some of the Stoicks of old pretended to do, by an imaginary Insensibility, or by changing the Names of Things, calling that no Evil which in reality is one; but by an absolute Resignation to the Will of God, and an hearty Acquiescing in his wise Providence, he is certain there is a God that governs the World, and that nothing happens to him but by his Order and Appointment: But he is certain also that this God has a real Kindness for him, and would not dispense any Event unto him, but what is really for his Good and Advantage. And these Thoughts so support his Spirits, that instead of fretting and complaining that Things succeed otherwise than he expected, he resolves with himself that That Condition whatever it be, in which he actually is, is indeed best for him, or at least what he may very well submit to with Patience and Resignation.

But farther, Besides this Security from outward Disturbances which our Virtue obtains for us, there is another Evil, which it also delivers us from, with which the wicked Man is almost perpetually haunted, and which seldom suffers him to enjoy any sincere or unmingled Pleasure. That I mean is the Pangs of an evil Conscience, the Fears, the Restlessness,

ness, the Confusion, the Amazement that arise in the Soul from the Sense of his Crimes, and the just Apprehensions of the Shame and Vengeance that await them, possibly in this Life, but most certainly in the Life to come.

How happy, how prosperous soever the Sinner may be, as to his other Affairs, yet these Furies he shall be sure to be plagued with: No Stateliness of Condition, no costly Entertainments, no Noise of Company will be able to drive them away. Every Man that is wicked cannot but know that he is so, and that very Knowledge is a Principle of perpetual Anguish and Disquietude. But were his Crimes ever so secret, yet he cannot be confident they will always continue so, and the very Apprehension of this makes him feel all the Shame and Amazement of a present Discovery. But put the Case he hath the good Luck to sin so closely, or in such a Nature that he need fear nothing from Men; yet he knows there is an offended God, to whom he hath a sad and fearful Reckoning to make; a God too just to be bribed, too mighty to be over-awed, too wise to be imposed upon. And is not this Man, think you, under such Reflexions as these likely to live a very comfortable Life? To the Judgment of others he perhaps appears a very happy Man; he hath the World at his Beck, all Things seem to conspire to make him a great Example of Pro-

sperity ; we admire, we applaud his Condition : But ah ! we know not how sad a Heart he often carries under this fair Outside. He endeavours all he can indeed to stifle his Cares, and to stop the Mouth of his Conscience : He thinks to divert it by Business, or to flatter it by little Sophistries, to drown it in Rivers of Wine, or to calm it with soft and gentle Airs : And he is indeed sometimes so successful in these Arts, as for a while to lay it asleep. But alas ! this is no lasting Peace, the least thing awakens it again, and then the poor Man returns to his Torment.

And now judge you, whether the honest and virtuous Man, that is free from all these Agonies, that is at Peace with God, and at Peace with his own Conscience ; that apprehendeth nothing terrible from the one, nor feels any thing troublesome from the other, but is safe from himself and from all the World in his own Innocence : Judge, I say, whether such a one has not laid to himself better and surer Foundations for Pleasure and a happy Life, than the Man that by indulging his Lusts and Vices, only breeds up a Snake in his Bosom, which will not cease to sting and gall him beyond what a witty Cruelty is able to invent.

Fourthly and lastly, Besides the Benefits of Religion for removing the Hindrance of our Pleasures, it also adds to human Life a world of Pleasures of its own, which vicious Men are utterly unacquainted with. And

And these are of so excellent a kind, so enravishing, that the highest Gratifications of Sense are not comparable to them. *Then* do we begin to enjoy true Pleasure indeed when our highest and divinest Faculties, which were wholly laid asleep while we lived the Life of Sense, begin to awake, and to exercise themselves upon their proper Objects ; Such a Life as this must needs be a Fountain of inexpressible Joy to him that leads it, and fill the Soul with transcendently greater Content than any thing upon Earth can possibly do. For this is the Life that is most agreeable to our Natures. While we live thus, things are with us as they should be ; our Souls are in their natural Posture, in that State they were framed and designed to live in : Whereas the Life of Sin is a State of Disorder and Confusion ; a perpetual Violence and Force upon our Natures. While we live thus we enjoy the Pleasures of good Men, whereas before when we were governed by Sense we could pretend to have no other Satisfaction but what the Brutes have as well as we. In this State of Life we gratify our highest and noblest Powers, the intellectual Appetites of our Souls ; which as they are infinitely capacious, so they have an infinite Good to fill them : Whereas in the sensual Life, the meanest, the dullest, and the most contracted Faculties of our Souls were only provided for.

So

So that 'tis not in the least to be questioned, but that, after you have once proved the refined Pleasures of Temperance and Virtue, and the Sweets which flow from the noble Mastery over your own Passions; after you have tasted how gracious the Lord is, you will proclaim it to all the World, that *one Day spent in his Courts is better than a thousand*. Nay, you will be ready to cry out with the Roman Orator (if it be lawful to quote the Testimony of a Heathen, after that of the divine Psalmist) *That one Day lived according to the Precepts of Virtue, is to be preferred before an Immortality of Sin*.

You will then alter your Sentiments of Things, and wonder that you should have been so strangely abused by false Representations of Virtue and Vice. You will then see that Religion is quite another thing than it appear'd to you before you became acquainted with it: Instead of the grim, sour, unpleasant Countenance in which you heretofore painted her to yourself, you will then discover nothing in her but what is infinitely lovely and charming. You will not then complain of the Narrowness of the Bounds, or the Scantiness of the Measures that it has confined your Desires to; for you will then find that you have hereby gained an Entrance into a far greater and more perfect Liberty. How ungentlely, how much against the grain of Nature soever it now looks to forgive an Injury
or

or an Afront ; you will then find it to be both far more easy and far more sweet than to revenge one. You will no longer think Works of Charity burdensome or expensive ; or that to do good Offices to every one is an Employment too mean for you ; for you will then experience, that there is no Sensuality like that of doing Good, and that it is a greater Pleasure to give a Kindness than to receive one.

But, O! the rapturous Pleasures that continually spring up in the Heart of a good Man, from the Sense of his Creator's Love, and the enchanting Prospect he hath of the Joy and Happiness of the other World. To think that God chargeth his Providence with him, takes care of all his Concerns, hears all his Prayers, provides all things needful for him, and that he shall hereafter live everlastingly in his Presence, be Partaker of his Glories, be ravished with his Love, and be acquainted with his Counsels. With what a mighty Scorn and Contempt will such a one look down upon all the little Gauderies and sickly Satisfactions that the Men of this World keep such a Stir about? How empty and evanid; how flat and unfavoury, will the best Pleasures on Earth appear to him in comparison of these divine Contentments? Was such our Condition, we should proclaim Virtue the only Mistress of Pleasure in the World, and that we never knew what it was to be an Epicure indeed,
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till we became the Subjects and Votaries of Godliness.

Thus have I gone through all those Heads which I at first proposed to insist upon. What now remains but that I resume the Apostle's Exhortation with which I began these Discourses, that, since you have seen Godliness is so exceedingly profitable to all the Purposes of this Life as well as the next: Since, as you have seen, *Length of Days is in her right Hand, and in her left Hand Riches and Honour; and all her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace:* You would also be persuaded seriously to apply yourselves to the Exercise of it: Which that you may do, *God of his infinite Mercy grant, &c.*



*On the Work of the Lord, and the
Certainty of its Reward.*

I CORINTHIANS XV. 58.

*Therefore, my beloved Brethren, be ye stedfast,
unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of
the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your
Labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

ST. Paul having in this Chapter been at singular Pains to establish the Truth of Christ's Resurrection, and from thence demonstrated not only the Possibility but likewise the Certainty and Necessity of a Resurrection to come, closeth up the whole Argument with this Exhortation of the Text. And this Exhortation is fairly deduced from his foregoing Discourse; for if Christ be really risen from the Dead, and if in Him all Men shall be made alive, then 'tis plain that our Faith and Hope are as well grounded as possible: Then 'tis certain that we are under the strictest Engagement, and have the highest Encouragement to *abound in the Works of the Lord*, and to imitate as far

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as possible his great Example; and this too with unshaken Constancy and Zeal. 'Tis true we cannot hope to arrive at the pitch of Perfection, of which he alone was the absolute Master; we cannot fulfil all Righteousness as he did, but still we may abound in his Work by such an humble Imitation of his Holiness and Perfections as may shew us to be *Approvers of Things that are excellent*, and Followers of Christ in Sincerity.

My Business therefore in the Prosecution of these Words, shall be to point out to you in what Respects you should imitate Christ and *abound in his Works*, and the Hopes and Encouragements given us to be stedfast and unmoveable in that glorious Undertaking.

First then, let us see in what Respects we should imitate Christ, and what his Work is that we are requir'd to abound in.

It has been an antient and standing Objection against all the famous Lawgivers and Philosophers, and the strictest Masters of Morals, that their Practice was still wide of their Principles, and that all their fine Rules and Precepts were only for Shew and Ostentation; and the *Stoics* in particular, who abound above others in swelling Words of Vanity, though they would persuade us, that their wise Man is equal (if not superior) to the Deity, yet they could never shew the Phœnix that they boast of.

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And 'tis a lasting Reproach to the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, those high Pretenders to Sanctity and Perfection in our Saviour's Days, that they said, and did not: That *they bound heavy Burdens and grievous to be born, and laid them on Mens Shoulders, but themselves would not move them with one of their Fingers.*

And indeed there is so much Frailty in our Flesh, so much Corruption inherent in our whole Nature, that the best of us all cannot pretend during this mortal Life to a perfect Degree of Innocence; but still he must be allowed to pass for the best Man who has the fewest Faults.

But the Example of our Lord was not like that of other Mortals, mixed up of Vice and Virtue, and therefore only to be admired because the Allay of Imperfection was less than usual, for it was the very Mirrour of unspotted Goodness, without the least imaginable Blemish.

Herein we may discern how Greatness and Humility, Power and Moderation, Innocence and Freedom, Zeal and Meekness, may dwell together, and act in Union. Herein we may behold perfect Piety and Justice, and Charity, and Purity, and Temperance, each Grace adorned with Gentleness, and crown'd with a most invincible Patience, under all manner of Obloquy, Oppression and Persecution, and still triumphant. In brief, we may learn from
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hence, how to pass the Time of our sojourning here on Earth decently; and by abounding in all these Virtues here, receive the Reward of our Labour hereafter.

But there are some particular Instances in which we ought more especially to follow our Leader.

And this I may venture to say, must be in those heavenly Graces and Virtues, which being so peculiar and remarkable in himself, he took care to ingraft into his Religion, as its chiefest Ornament, and to recommend to his Disciples, as the honourable and distinguishing Badge of their Christian Profession. And these, I take it, are principally his Charity, his Humility, his Meekness, and his Patience.

The first is his Charity, so incomparably great, generous, and good, that it must needs inflame us with a holy Emulation, and compel us to transcribe (the best we can) the noble Pattern. *Greater Love* (says he, who alone was able to excel it) *bath no Man than this, that a Man lay down his Life for his Friend.* But that the Son of God should take up the Life of a Man, on purpose to lay it down again to save even his Enemies; that Sin the only hateful Thing in the World, should be the Cause of this marvellous Vouchsafement; that Sinners the most unlovely of all God's Creatures, should be the courted Objects of such condescending Love, This sure passes all Expression; and yet it is not altogether

altogether out of the reach of our Imagination. No! St. *John* makes it a necessary Inference: *Beloved, if God loved us, we ought also to love one another.* And that we may think ourselves obliged to come up as near in Degree to this divine Love, as we are capable of, he tells us again, *Hereby perceive we the Love of God, because he laid down his Life for us, and we ought to lay down our Lives for the Brethren.* Nay, our Saviour himself enforces the Duty from his own unparallel'd Example: *This is my Commandment that ye love one another, as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*

In the next Place, his Humility is also set before us as a fair Copy for us to write after. And here again, our profoundest Admiration must needs be all employ'd to consider the wonderful Stoop of heavenly Condescension: That heavenly Glory should contrive to shew a dark Side; that incomparable Majesty should be content to be degraded; that the Son of God should from the supereminent Height of Greatness descend to a Familiarity with Man, and put himself into the same Rank and Condition with us his Subjects and Vassals by Creation; that he should deign to take our Nature upon him, and to wear the despicable Rags of Mortality; and after a Life spent in the meanest Circumstances, and the humblest of all good Offices, that he should submit to die as miserably and ignominiously as Mortal

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ever did; and all to save a perishing World of Sinners! We cannot fure but wonder, and adore that condescending Goodness, which led the Way to this prodigious Abasement. But 'tis not enough to stand gazing and admiring, we must *gird up our Loins, and be ready to follow him*; we must in our Proportion humbly imitate his truly great, nay glorious Humility. And,

Another amiable Grace nearly allied to Humility, and sweetly resembling it, is Meekness.

These two are commonly join'd together in Scripture: *Walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith ye are called*, (says St. Paul) *with all Lowliness and Meekness*. And our Lord himself sets us a plain Lesson of both in one, in his own admirable Pattern, *Learn of me*, (says he, so mildly, so condescendingly) *for I am meek and lowly*: For Meekness is founded in Humility, and supported by it. It is the high proud Spirit that is liable to sudden Sallies of Passion, and strong Commotions; that is apt to retain bitter and lasting Resentments, and to pursue malicious Revenge; whereas he that has a modest and mean Opinion of himself, he that is truly *poor in Spirit*; that Man is not quickly sensible of small Slights and Neglects; he understands human Nature too well to think himself without Faults, or to expect to find others so.

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How becoming is this Ornament of a meek and a quiet Spirit? How noble a Mastery over the Passions? How high and difficult the Attainment? And how much do the best human Copies of all this Virtue (such as are rare, very rare to be met with) fall short of the incomparable Original?

For consider, how transcendently bright this Grace shone forth in the blessed *Jesus*. He was free from all imaginable Imperfections, absolutely *without Spot or Blemish*: *He went about doing good*: Harm or Wrong he did none; just Cause of Offence he never gave to any. In a word, he was perfect Innocence, as well as perfect Goodness, as well as perfect Meekness; and yet how was this heavenly Man treated during his Ministry here on Earth? Even with the basest Ingratitude and foulest Indignity, and pursued with restless and unrelenting Malice to his dying Hour.

And how did he pass through this Scene of repeated Trials? Perfectly composed and undisturb'd: Insomuch that amidst all these trying Provocations he would seldom administer so much as a sharp, though just, Reproof; unless when it was extorted from him by the insulting Malice and odious Hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees. But even to them as well as others, his Words were generally mild and soft, though his Argument might carry harsh Consequences with it, that they had

drawn upon themselves. To their little Reflexions upon his Parentage and Country, he designed no other Answer but this proverbial Saying, familiar to them; *A Prophet is not without Honour, save in his own Country, and in his own House.* The more scandalous Imputation of being a *Glutton*, and a *Wine-bibber*, a *Friend of Publicans, and Sinners*; he gently wiped off, only by intimating his charitable Intention in conversing with such People, in another Proverb, *They that be whole need no Physician, but they that are sick.* That most impudent Charge, *This Fellow casteth not out Devils, but by Beelzebub the Prince of the Devils*; he calmly repelled by another received Maxim, *Every Kingdom divided against itself, is brought to Desolation.* In the Application of which he securely left his Accusers to be the Judges both for him and for themselves. And even when the *Jews* took up Stones to stone him as a *Blasphemer*, he first gently upbraided their Violence in these Words: *Many good Works have I shew'd you from my Father; for which of those Works do ye stone me?* And then he went on sedately to refute the Charge of Blasphemy, from their own Scripture. To shut up this wonderful Scene; when they were preparing to put the finishing Hand to all their Outrages, by hawling him to Judgment and Execution, how did he sustain the furious Prosecution? Not with a sullen but composed Silence, such

as proceeded from a Consciousness of his own Innocence, and a Disdain of the Accusation laid against him. How serene and unmoved did he bear all the various Contumelies and Inventions of Cruelty? And when he was just about to expire, how did he pour forth his meek and innocent Soul, in a compassionate Plea and charitable Intercession for his Crucifiers?

If therefore we would see a finish'd Piece of Meekness, and its proper Attitude, we must look up to the Cross of Christ, and thence must take our Copy. This silent Rebuke will lay the Storm of all our furious and passionate Resentments, unless our Spirits are more turbulent and boisterous than the Winds and the Seas, that so suddenly sunk into a Calm and obeyed him.

In the last Place, the wonderful Patience of our Lord, is another Excellency of his in which we ought to abound. This too we behold on the Cross, in its highest Exaltation, as it is very remarkable in all his Steps towards it. When he came to taste the very Dregs of the bitter Cup he was to swallow, how quiet, how mute was the Lamb of God under all the Cruelties previous to his Slaughter, under all the torturing lingering Pains of dying (as it were) several Deaths in one? And yet during this tedious Interval, the Powers of Darkness were let loose against him, and the Influences of Heaven were suspended; and so thick and black
was

was the Cloud of the divine Displeasure (not yet appeased) that to his suffering Humanity it looked like utter Dereliction, insomuch that he cried out with a loud Voice, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

This then is the heroic Pattern that we are to copy after, for even he himself, the great Captain of our Salvation, hath required us to take up the Cross and follow him, *who when he was reviled, reviled not again, when he suffered he threatned not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.* This should stop the Mouth of our loudest Complaints, and pluck out the Sting of the greatest Afflictions that can befall us.

Let us therefore be ever furnish'd with this Armour of Patience, lest, if the Captain of our Salvation should call us at any time to suffer with him, we should be Cowards and Deserters. Of this he himself forewarns us: *If any come to me and hate not his Father and Mother, and Children, and Brethren, and Sisters, (that is, supposing a Competition between them) yea and his own Life also, he cannot be my Disciple.* But who, you'll say, is sufficient for all this? How can frail Flesh and Blood wrestle with such mighty Difficulties? How can Sense and Feeling be reconcil'd to Suffering? How can Fear be disciplin'd till it become valiant? How can natural Affection be taught to forget itself, and silently to give place to the Love of God?

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These are hard Sayings, who can bear them? And yet this or something like this may at any time be the Christian's Lot. We have need therefore always to keep Patience near us, and under any Afflictions that may befall us, to consider him that endur'd such Contradiction of Sinners, lest we be wearied and faint in our Minds.

Is any Man wrong'd in Reputation, or loaded with Calumny, let him consider that Christ himself, innocent and unblameable as he was, was represented as a *Wine-bibber*, and a *Glutton*, a *Companion of Publicans and Sinners*. Is any Man in Poverty, let him consider that the Son of God incarnate, even the Lord of the Universe, was once in that Circumstance; and that Man must be unreasonably proud sure, who is ashamed of that Condition in which Christ himself chose to appear; and as unreasonably discontented, who can think it such a Hardship to fare as he did. Again, is any Man entangled thro' the Treachery of Friends, or the Malice of insidious Enemies, let him consider that the Saviour of the World, the best good Man that ever liv'd, was beset by a Troop of guileful Hypocrites, watching to insnare him, and find Accusation against him. Lastly, let us consider that Christ himself was made perfect thro' Sufferings, and that this is the Way in which he brings many Sons to Glory, tries their Courage and Constancy first, and then crowns

crowns all their Labours and Sorrows with everlasting Rest and triumphant Joy.

In a word, let us abound chearfully in all these Christian Virtues, with Eyes perpetually fix'd upon our great Commander. Let his Precepts be a *Lamp to our Feet*, and his Example a *Light to our Paths*: Him let us in all things revere and obey: Him let us always admire and imitate.

Let us imitate, as far as we are able, his marvellous Love, his meek and humble Condescension, his unspotted Purity, his invincible Patience, his heavenly Piety, and that universal Goodness and Holiness, that adorned and sanctified every Action of his Life. Thus shall we reap the Benefit of his Resurrection, and happily find at the last *that our Labour has not been in vain in the Lord*. Which leads to

The second Consideration proposed, viz. the Hopes and Encouragements given us to be stedfast and unmoveable in that glorious Undertaking.

Our Faith of this promis'd Reward carries all the Evidence with it that 'tis possible to have of Things not seen; and our Hope comes as near absolute Security as 'tis possible to be, without the blest Fruition and Experience: Do we not therefore stand obliged in all Reason, as well as Duty, *to be always abounding in the Work of the Lord*, i. e. to be very zealous, and industrious in his Service, to be very chearful
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and constant, and persevering in our Imitation of him, and Obedience to him, and by a continual *Growth in Grace* and Godliness, to *press toward the Mark* for the Prize of the *high Calling of God in Christ Jesus*; that so by any Means we may attain (with St. Paul our Monitor and Guide) to the *Resurrection of the Just*? Yes surely, we stand in all Reason bound to do our utmost in God's Service, even upon this Consideration, that he is so gracious and liberal to us; for he does not expect or require at our Hand any notional or abstracted kind of Love; he does not exact from us a rigid Task of Duty separate from our Interest, but he permits us, he emboldens us; nay, he commands us in serving him, to have *Respect to the Recompence of Reward*, looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our Faith, who, for the Joy that was set before him, endured the Cross and despised the Shame, and is set down at the Right-hand of the Throne of God.

And Secondly, we have this farther Encouragement to abound in the Work of the Lord, with all Zeal and Alacrity, *forasmuch as we know our Labour is not in vain in the Lord*. This, this is the sacred Anchor of our Hope; and Hope, we know, is the most vigorous Spring of Action. It is that which keeps Things in perpetual Motion, and preserves Industry alive in the World.

It is for this the Merchant changes his native Clime, and sails thro' deep and distant Seas, wrestles with Winds and Tempests, scorches under the Line, and freezes under the Pole, and all upon the hopeful, but hazardous Prospect of finding his Account in the End; for he is far from being certain, that this Labour shall not be in vain; far from being certain of arriving at the desir'd Port, or returning Home again with Wealth, or in Safety; and even if he should become Master of his Wishes, worldly Wealth at best is but a very perishable Commodity, a very uncertain Possession: It is liable to many Accidents, Vicissitudes, and great Abuses, and it has this the worst of all bad Qualities, that the more a Man sets his Heart upon it, the less it satisfies; for *he that loveth Silver, shall not be satisfied with Silver.*

But as we know that we were not redeemed with corruptible Things, as Silver and Gold, but with the precious Blood of Christ, so we know that the Purchase is equally worthy of the Price, and that we have a secure Title to an infinite and everlasting Reward, which, our Perseverance only supposed, nothing can deprive us of; for we have the Pledge of God's own infallible Word, that *if we remain faithful unto Death, he will give us a Crown of Life.*

Christ by his Resurrection is become both our High-Priest and our King; both our Advocate and our Lord. By that Power which
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he then obtained as our High-Priest and Advocate, he doth with Authority recommend us and all our Concernments to his Father. As our King and Lord, he rules and governs; he takes care of us; he provides for us; he repulses the Insults of his, and our Enemies, and defeats all their Attempts against us: And lastly has secured to us, if we will accept of the Favour, an Immortality of Bliss in the Life to come. Let us therefore all carefully observe the Apostle's excellent Advice, and continue *stedfast and immoveable, always abounding in the Work of the World*, since by his Death and Resurrection we have such Assurance given us that *our Labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.*

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defends all that we have against all
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